Life of Voltaire

James Parton

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VOLTAIRE.— Aged 75.

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LIFE

OF

VOLTAIRE.

BY

JAMES PARTON.

C'est dommage, à la vérité, de passer une partie de sa vie à détruire de vieux châteaux enchantés. Il vaudrait mieux établir des vérités que d'examiner des mensonges ; mais où sont les vérités?

VOLTAIRE, 1760.

VOLUME II.

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LIFE OF VOLTAIRE.

CHAPTER I.

THE KING OF PRUSSIA'S SUPPER PARTY.

FREDERIC had gathered about him a number of peculiar characters during the eight years of his reign. At this period of his life he seemed two men in one, such a contrast was there between Frederic the head of the Prussian government, and Frederic the head of Prussian society. The chief of a state, indeed, *has* two kinds of duty, and needs to be two men, for it belongs to his office both to administer and to represent: like the master of a great house, who in the morning examines the accounts and views the leak in the roof, and in the evening receives company and beams at the head of his table. The Romans did not waste a man in having two consuls. Constitutional monarchs reign, but leave to ministers the nobler toil of ruling. The finished republic, perhaps, will reach this necessary division of labor in some suitable way.

Frederic both reigned and ruled. It was and is too much for one mortal; and if he acquitted himself of the double task better than any other man has done in Europe during recent centuries, most of his work was but for the day. Bonaparte demolished a good deal of it at Jena; Goethe and Schiller corrected more of it at Weimar. In his day, however, he was a victorious ruler, who redeemed, in some degree, the tarnished character of the royal houses, and kept the name of king from being entirely contemptible. At the moment when Voltaire arrived, to add to his court the *éclat* of the first literary name of the period, his position was singularly brilliant. He was thirty-eight years of age. He had had his first fight for Silesia, and issued from the strife with the province firmly his

own. His second fight for it — his Seven Years' War, for which he was always assiduously preparing — was still five years distant; and, meanwhile, he could expend time and revenue in making Berlin attractive and famous. The city then contained about ninety thousand inhabitants. It had its French theatre, its ballet, its Italian opera, its Academy; the king, with generous intent at least, striving to provide for his subjects the noblest pleasures which the wit and taste of man had yet devised.

In one particular this king was most fortunate. At a time when the best brains of Europe were impaired by the fumes of alcohol, his own father being a besotted toper, he inherited a constitution which, in the absence of hygienic knowledge, enabled and compelled him to be temperate. This was an immense advantage, for the greatest man has no brain to waste; and it kept him from fatal errors of judgment, such as his deep-drinking successors have committed. He had a command of his powers such as we see possessed by clean-brained men of to-day, who know how to live without injuring that best part of their capital which they carry under their hats. At times of trouble, when his brute of a father would have drowned his vexation or suspense in a quart of wine, Frederic would conquer the crisis by composing a hundred French verses. His habits and his methods were mostly those of a civilized being. The cardinal defect of his nature, his aversion to women, we cannot judge, because no competent authority has spoken the word that could explain it.

The tourists of that period kept Europe well advised as to his ways and pursuits. They described him as still retaining the elegance and vivacity of his early manhood; his deportment that of a German long resident in Paris, who spoke the German language only to his grooms, soldiers, and horses. His countenance became more German as he advanced in life; but at this period, as we see in the portraits, he was the European gentleman, with his chestnut hair in curls and a queue, and his kingly star on his breast. The hair weighed heavily upon the soul of man from the day when Louis XIV. adopted the mode of adding a cubit to his stature by a stupendous wig, down to the happy moment when the question was printed in a conspicuous periodical, Why Shave? In

1750 Europe had reached the curl-and-queue period, and it was accounted a virtue in this king that, on getting up at five in the morning, he put on a linen cloak and dressed his own hair. At seven he dressed for the day in a uniform of blue cloth and red facings, yellow waistcoat, cocked hat, and white feather, all renewed on a fixed day, three times a year. After a morning of work in his cabinet, upon the very stroke of eleven, he reviewed and relieved his guards, himself giving the word of command, scrutinizing closely every movement, — doing this duty, in fact, precisely as he wished it done at every post in his dominions. He dined at half past twelve, with ministers and ambassadors, sat one hour at table, and was very dainty in his desserts of fine fruit. He took no pleasure in the killing of birds and beasts, but promptly dismissed his father's costly retinue of huntsmen and dogs.

At five in the afternoon, his day's work done, he became the man of elegant leisure. He composed verses; he summoned his reader; he conversed with his friends, until, at seven, his evening concert was announced. It was commoner then than it is now for men of fortune to play upon musical instruments. Frederic, if we may believe men who had no interest in flattering him, played the flute well enough to take his part creditably in a band of professional musicians. He was flutist in his own band, which was long reckoned the best in Europe. His nightly concert was varied by a quintet of famous singers, a man, a woman, and three eunuchs, all with beautiful voices highly trained. At nine began to assemble that famous supper party of eccentrics, numbering, when all were present, as many as seventeen, but usually limited to ten. The meal was served at half past nine, and the company remained till midnight, when the king withdrew. The most bewitching tale, the most absorbing topic, could rarely detain this man of method from his bed for more than five minutes. It was because he was as sober at midnight as at dawn.

These supper companions of Frederic, several of whom were actors in the comedy of Voltaire's residence in Prussia, were an incongruous band indeed. First in rank must be placed Maupertuis, the old friend, tutor, guest, of Madame du Châtelet, president of the Berlin Academy, a French mathematician of European name. He was now domesticated at Berlin, hav-

ing married there a lady belonging to the court of the queen-mother. Besides his mathematical knowledge, he possessed agreeable talents. He could play well on more than one musical instrument, had studied music, and could write verses, some of which are not yet forgotten. When he was in the northern regions, "flattening the earth," he had some passages of love with the maidens of those countries, and even brought two of them home to Paris. A little song written by him upon his fair Christine, whom he "lost in the snow," is wonderfully absurd, but it has been admired. He was looking for the lost damsel, with his eyes filled with tears, when he saw a place in the snow that seemed whiter and finer than the rest. "I ran thither; it was my Christine." In defending Newton he showed talent for satire, and wrote some pieces of that nature which were effective in their day. He had developed, in the course of his victorious career, a self-love that was inordinate, exacting, and sometimes vindictive. The words employed by Dr. Franklin in describing a very "unclubbable" member of the Philadelphia Junto remind us of Maupertuis: "Like most great mathematicians I have met with, he expected universal precision in everything said, or was forever denying or distinguishing upon trifles, to the disturbance of all conversation." Frederic speaks of him, in one of his letters, as "*fécond* in inquietudes." He valued him highly, however, assigned him a pension of twelve thousand francs a year, conferred much with him on the affairs of the Academy, and enjoyed his society at the suppers, where the presence of the master was a check upon the disagreeable egotisms of guests.

Some of the king's notes to the president of the Academy have the interest of good sense. In one of them, when objecting to Maupertuis's project of having a medal struck in the king's honor, he says, "To tell the truth, I do not love these metallic honors. It is rare that posterity confirms eulogies and the inscriptions upon medals. Let us do good without hope of recompense; let us fulfill our duty without ostentation; and our name will live among people of worth." Again, upon confirming one of Maupertuis's nominations, Frederic wrote this golden sentence: —

"Bad appointments to office are a threefold inconvenience: they are an injury to public business; they dishonor the

prince; and they are a kind of robbery of those who deserve advancement."

Before the arrival of Voltaire, Maupertuis was the most distinguished, though not the most agreeable, of the king's evening circle. He could enliven that circle, when so disposed, with recollections of his early days at the old channel port of St. Malo, his five years of service as a French soldier, his residence in Holland and in England, and the hot warfare he had waged at Paris against the powerful majority who so long refused to accept the Newtonian astronomy. He was somewhat clumsy and ungainly in his person, never quite at ease in polite society, and disposed to avoid it. In the first days of his residence in Prussia, Voltaire remarked that "Maupertuis had become unsocial."

Another of the supper circle was the Marquis d'Argens, also a Frenchman and an author. The son of a lawyer and magistrate of Aix, he early recoiled from his father's profession, entered the French army, and ran away to Spain with an actress, whom he was saved from marrying at the last moment. He swallowed powdered glass with the intention to kill himself. An emetic relieved him, and his father administered the additional medicine of a *lettre de cachet*, which consigned him to a fortress for six months. A diplomatic appointment carried him to Algiers and to Constantinople, at both of which he had adventures of a harum-scarum nature. His father's patience being at length exhausted, the young man saw himself, at thirty-one years of age, without the means of subsistence. Literature, the last resort of many vagabonds, saved him also. He wrote romances for the Holland publishers, a vocation for which his own wild and wasteful life had been a long preparation. He wrote five novels in his first year: "The Memoirs of the Countess de Mirol," and others of similar titles. Then followed a series of "Jewish Letters," "Chinese Letters," and others, surcharged with that scorn of existing creeds and usages which was so general then. There was also the spice of scandal in these compositions which many people love. They were read with eager interest all over Europe, and caught the eye of Frederic, Prince Royal of Prussia. The prince invited the audacious and rollicking author to visit him. D'Argens gayly replied that he was five feet ten in stature,

not ill-made, and dared not venture within reach of a king who was apt to pick up any stroller of decent proportions for his tall brigade. On Frederic's accession, however, he entered his service, and soon became his most indispensable companion. Besides his gayety and talent, D'Argens had a fund of anecdote, gossip, and reminiscence. He knew the stage, also, from the point of view of the green-room, and he made extensive journeys in France for the purpose of picking up dramatic talent for the Berlin theatre. A few months before Voltaire's arrival, he had had the good sense to marry a worthy actress; which scandalized the Berlin world and made him happy. Frederic's correspondence with this sprightly adventurer is exceedingly voluminous, as he was the agent usually employed by the king in luring French artists and poets to the Prussian capital. It was he who captured Baculard d'Arnaud. He had to lament the reluctance of Frenchmen to leave Paris. "The fondness of French men of letters for Paris," he wrote, in 1747, "is so great, they are so content with the agreeable things they enjoy there, that it is difficult to induce even mediocre people to leave it." Such is the result of making cities delightful, as Frederic was striving to render Berlin.

Then there was La Mettrie, physician, author, materialist, atheist, and *bon garçon*, a fellow townsman of Maupertuis. The son of a rich merchant of St. Malo, he began by obeying his father in preparing himself diligently for the priesthood; he even became a Jansenist, and wrote a tract in defense of Jansenism, which was accepted by the sect as the true doctrine. Then he abandoned theology for medicine, threw himself upon the study thereof with zeal, and served at Fontenoy as surgeon to one of the French regiments. A familiar experience suddenly made him a materialist of the most pronounced type. During one of his campaigns he caught a bad fever, and, while recovering, he observed that the thinking faculty was impaired or improved in precise accordance with the condition of the animal machine. If the brain was diseased, the thoughts were distorted; if the brain was weak, the thoughts were feeble; if the brain was sound, the thoughts were rational; if the brain was stimulated, the thoughts were active. He concluded that man was a mere machine, the "soul" being only a product of the animal economy; and this

bold idea he promulgated in various treatises, the most noted of which was entitled "Man-Machine." At present, a jovial young doctor's opinions upon such matters do not excite consternation. But, in 1745, so much importance was attached to speculative opinions upon subjects beyond the reach of investigation that the chaplain of La Mettrie's regiment was able to get the merry surgeon dismissed from his post for presuming to interpret the universe after a theory of his own. La Mettrie then published a piece in which he held up to scorn and derision the medical practice of his time, sparing it no more than Molière had done in his comedies of the preceding century. He described the fashionable doctors of the day as charlatans, whose sole aim was to extract large fees from credulous patients by pompous humbug. He even indicated some of the most noted living practitioners by allusions to facts that were generally known of them. At last, as if only amused by the storm of abuse and obloquy which these audacities provoked, he dedicated his "Man-Machine" to the pious and orthodox Haller, professor of natural science at Göttingen; "a savant," said La Mettrie, "whom I have never seen, and whom fifty years have not delivered from all the prejudices of childhood."

The erudite and respectable Haller could not submit in silence to this extravagant jest. He publicly disavowed all sympathy with the atheist, whereupon La Mettrie published a burlesque romance, in which the austere Haller figured in scenes the most foreign to his habits and character: among others, as presiding at a supper of the "nymphs" who frequented the beer gardens of Göttingen. The professor deemed it his duty to give a serious and detailed reply to this folly, to the great amusement of idle readers.

Frederic, King of Prussia, a victim from his youth up of the austerities which La Mettrie ridiculed, cast a favorable eye upon him, and told Maupertuis to investigate and report upon him. Maupertuis reported: "I do not doubt that La Mettrie will give you perfect satisfaction, if your majesty can put the drag upon that impetuous imagination of his, which has hitherto carried him beyond the bounds of propriety and reasonable liberty. He reads well, relates agreeably, his mind being ready money. He will be very useful to your majesty."

This in 1748. Voltaire, in 1750, found him installed at Berlin, as reader, companion, familiar, of the king, pensioned and established, — a *bon diable*, who was "amusing for a few minutes, then a bore." Endless anecdotes of him are recorded in the multitudinous gossip relating to this peculiar court. Soon after his arrival at Berlin, he was told, on passing a grocer's shop, that it was the abode of a *materialist*, the name given by Germans to grocers. La Mettrie entered, asked to see the materialist, embraced him with transport, and congratulated him upon having reached such rational opinions as the name implied.

Another Frenchman of the king's supper parties was a young officer, "the brave Major Chasot," as Frederic himself styled him in a public bulletin. He had begun his military career in a favorite French regiment; but, having dangerously wounded an officer of powerful connections in a duel, he was obliged to flee across the border into Germany, where he was presented to Frederic, then Prince Royal. The prince, captivated by his agreeable qualities, adopted him into his familiar circle; so that, on the eventful day of Molwitz, King Frederic's first battle, Chasot was riding close to the king at the moment when the battle seemed lost, and Frederic himself was about to be surrounded. The Austrian officer cried out to the royal staff, "The king, gentlemen, — where is the king?" Chasot spurred upon the Austrian, saying, "You ask for the king; here he is!" Chasot was instantly attacked, but fought so well that he kept the hostile party engaged for some minutes, during which the king escaped; and, just as he was about to sink under his many wounds, a company of Prussians rescued him. Frederic proclaimed him his saviour, and promoted him to the rank of major. Not the less did he sentence him to the fortress of Spandau for a year, when, some time after, he killed a Prussian bully in a duel. In a few weeks, however, the king pardoned him, and soon restored him to all his former favor. Chasot, too, was a flutist of the most persistent disposition,— one of those amateurs whose merciless practice drives their neighbors mad.

Darget, another of the king's readers and associates, came to Prussia as *attaché* of the French ambassador, Valori, who used to accompany the king in his first campaigns. By a

curious coincidence, Darget saved his chief by a device similar to that by which Chasot saved his. A band of pandours having surprised M. de Valori's camp at break of day, Darget put on the ambassador's dressing-gown, assumed the ambassador, and was carried away as a great prize to the Austrian head-quarters. "Are you M. Valori?" asked the general. "No, monsieur, I am his secretary." "How did you dare to say you were M. de Valori?" asked the Austrian. "I dared," replied Darget, "because I ought." The incident pleased the king, and, Darget being promptly exchanged, he made him reader, secretary, companion, confidant.

Besides these native Frenchmen, there was an Irish Frenchman at Frederic's court, "Lord Tyrconnell," a refugee from the lost cause of James II. France had taken him into high favor, and he was now at Berlin in the character of French ambassador, one of the diplomatic corps whom Frederic favored. He gave great British dinners at the Prussian capital, too weighty for the imperfect digestion of an author; but Lady Tyrconnell "received" afterwards very agreeably, though there was a tendency, even then, to the barbaric crush. Frederic, not unwilling to displease his uncle, George II. of England, returned the compliment of Lord Tyrconnell's appointment by sending as his own ambassador to Paris George Keith, a Scotch Jacobite, a refugee from the lost cause of the Pretender. "It has the air of a joke," wrote Voltaire to his niece." He mentioned, also, by way of showing the freedom accorded by Frederic to his servants, that Lord-Marshal Keith took with him to Paris a pretty little Turkish girl, who, having been taken prisoner at the capture of a city, had been given to the Scotch volunteer as a present. "She is a good Mahometan," adds Voltaire. "Her master leaves her entire liberty of conscience. He has in his suite a kind of Tartar valet, who has the honor to be a pagan; for his own part, he is, I believe, an Anglican, or something near it. All this forms rather a pleasant mixture, which proves that people can live together, though not agreeing in opinion."

Was there, then, no German at this German monarch's table, to which other countries had contributed so many guests? It was related of another German prince of this period, who shared Frederic's taste for Frenchmen and his

contempt for Germans, that, one evening, a guest, looking up and down the table, remarked, "It is only the master who is not French!" This could not be said of Frederic's supper-table every evening. The king's brother and heir presumptive, Prince Henry, had a seat there, *ex officio*, when he could get leave from his regiment. Algarotti, too, who was still in Frederic's service, was an Italian. There was, also, one old reprobate from the late king's tobacco orgies, Baron Pollnitz, a Prussian, who had a rare collection of stories in his memory, and told them amusingly. Frederic tolerated him, and he served to justify the king's preference for the lighter and brighter sons of Gaul.

The child, however, was born who was destined to avenge and adorn a country so unknown to its king. The baby Goethe was a year old when Voltaire witnessed the Berlin carousal of August, 1750.

In such a circle as this, Voltaire would have easily taken the first place, even if he had not been the new-comer and the favorite. All but Maupertuis hailed him as a precious acquisition, for the business of being brilliantly agreeable to a master every evening, from nine to twelve, becomes monotonous. Voltaire, after forty years' practice in supping with "the great," knew the arts by which cloyed minds are entertained, — as an old dependent in a remote country house is familiar with all the possible games of the drawing-room. During the first weeks, too, he remained under the illusions of the honeymoon. All the world of Berlin paid court to him. He at once organized a dramatic company of princes, princesses, and courtiers, of which he was himself the director. "Rome Sauvée" was performed before the queens and their courts, Prince Henry taking a part in the play, and the author enacting his favorite Cicero once more, with great applause. Others of his severer tragedies followed, and, at last, the tender "Zaïre" drew tears from all eyes, the author assuming the aged Lusignan, Christian martyr. Racine's "Andromache" was presented in due time. Comedies were interspersed, and all the court circle agreed that the king had alleviated human life in Berlin by adding a Voltaire to his conquest of Silesia.

One of the anecdotes of this period is pleasing. A cadet in the military academy of Berlin, eleven years old, was extremely

desirous of witnessing Voltaire's little comedy of "Nanine," one of the performances of this illustrious company of comedians. He addressed a poetical note to the author and director: —

"Ne pouvant plus gourmander
Le désir ardent qui m'anime,
Daignez, seigneur, m'accorder
Un billet pour voir 'Nanine.'"[1]

To which Voltaire replied: —

"Qui sait si fort intéresser
Merite bien qu'on le previenne;
Oui, parmi nous viens te placer,
Et nous ferons qu'on t'y retienne."[2]

Another anecdote of the theatre is not quite so credible nor creditable. For "Rome Sauvée" they sent him a number of soldiers as supernumeraries, whose awkwardness disturbed very much the too sensitive performer who played Cicero. He cried out, at length, loud enough to be heard all over the house, "I asked for men, and they have sent me Germans!" at which the courtly audience is said to have laughed. Goethe was not born too soon, if this story is true, and Schiller might have made greater haste.

During these gay weeks and longer, Voltaire seems to have been at times completely fascinated. He thought that he had done a wise act in changing his abode. In Prussia, as he was well pleased to repeat, there was no ass of Mirepoix to be despised and feared; no Bull Unigenitus; no body of clergy and courtiers getting fat preferment by affecting zeal for that preposterous document; no *billets de confession;* no *lettres de cachet;* no Frérons earning bread and prestige by irritating the sensitive self-love of authors; no cabals of the parquette to damn a play; no sharp hail of epigrams whenever Piron was displeased. Nor was there a dull semblance of a king to give countenance and power to everything most hostile to the welfare and honor of France. During the first three months of his residence in Prussia, he was accustomed to write to his niece and his "guardian angels" in this strain: —

[1] Unable longer to curb the ardent desire which animates me, deign, my lord, to grant me a ticket to see "Nanine."

[2] One who knows how to interest so strongly deserves to have his wish gratified. Yes, come and place yourself among us, and we will try to keep you there.

[To D'Argental, September 1, 1750.] "I find a port after thirty years of storms. I find the protection of a king, the conversation of a philosopher, the agreeable qualities of an amiable man, all united in one who for sixteen years has wished to console me for my misfortunes, and put me in security against my enemies. Everything is to be feared for me in Paris as long as I live, notwithstanding my places and the goodness even of the king. Here, I am sure of a destiny forever tranquil. If one can be sure of anything, it is of the character of the King of Prussia. I was formerly much put out with him on account of a French officer, condemned cruelly by the king's father, whose pardon I had asked. I did not know that this favor had been accorded. The King of Prussia does very noble actions without notifying his people. He has just sent fifty thousand francs in a very pretty little casket to an old lady of the court, whom his father had condemned to a punishment entirely in the Turkish style. This ancient despotic wrong of the late king was spoken of again some time ago; he was unwilling either to show disrespect to the memory of his father or to allow the injustice to remain. He chose an estate of that lady as the scene of a sham-fight of ten thousand troops, — a kind of spectacle worthy of the conqueror of Austria. He pretended that during the exercises a hedge had been cut down on the land of the lady in question. Not a twig of it had been laid low; but he persisted in saying that damage had been done, and sent the fifty thousand francs to repair it. My dear and honored friend, how then are great men constituted, if this man is not one?"

[To his niece, Madame de Fontaine, September 23, 1750.] "He is as amiable as you are. He is a king, I grant; but it is a passion of sixteen years; he has turned my head. I have had the insolence to think that nature made me for him. I have found a conformity so singular between all his tastes and mine, that I have forgotten he is sovereign of half Germany, while the other trembles at his name; that he has gained five battles; that he is the greatest general in Europe; that he is surrounded by big devils of heroes six feet high. .... You other Parisians think that I am in Lapland; know that we have had a summer as warm as yours, that we have eaten good peaches and good muscat pears, and that for three or four degrees of the sun, more or less, you must not look down upon people."

[To the king, October 8th.] "I prostrate myself before your scepter, your pen, your sword, your imagination, your justness of understanding, and your universality."

[To Madame Denis, October 13th.] "Here we are in retirement at Potsdam; a place inhabited, it is true, by men in mustache and grenadiers' caps, but, God be thanked, I see them not. I labor

peaceably in my rooms to the sound of the drum. I go no more to the king's dinners; there are too many generals and princes. I could not accustom myself to be always opposite a king, in ceremony, and to talk in public. I sup with him in a company not at all numerous. The supper is shorter, gayer, and more wholesome. I should die at the end of three months of chagrin and indigestion, if I were obliged to dine every day with the king in public."

[To D'Argental, October 15th.] "I am leading here at Potsdam the solitary and busy life which suits at once my health and my studies. From my working-room, I have only three steps to take to sup with a man full of spirit, grace, imagination, who is the bond of society, and who has no other misfortune than that of being a very great and powerful king. I enjoy the pleasure of being useful to him in his studies, and draw from them new strength to direct my own. It seems that nature made me expressly for him; in a word, all my hours are delicious. I have not found here the smallest prick of a thorn among my roses."

Such were his transports during the first weeks. The project of traveling in Italy was soon given up; perhaps, because, as the winter drew on, his health declined, and he could not face a long journey, much of which he had intended to perform on horseback. Wagnière intimates that the true reason why Voltaire lived and died without seeing Italy was his fear of the Inquisition, — a fear not groundless, while a Boyer was powerful at the court of France. Frederic, as Wagnière tells us, intended to send him to Rome as his *chargé d'affaires*, which would have made him safe in Italy. But this scheme was too long delayed, and so the author of the "Henriade" and of "Rome Sauvée" never stood upon the site of Cicero's forum, nor brought a twig of laurel from the tomb of Virgil.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST TIFF.

How enviable the lot of this company of bright spirits must have seemed to lookers-on in Europe! Each of them had his chosen, congenial task, which he appeared to be executing in circumstances more favorable than had ever before concurred. Much of their work was of an elevated and inspiring nature. The king was governing Prussia with all the wisdom and force that he possessed; he gave the best of himself and of his days to the service of his country, setting an example of plodding fidelity which corporal or prince could safely follow. He was recording his country's history, celebrating the valor of its heroes, and preparing it for that larger and grander future which it is perhaps soon to enter upon as a federation of republican states. Voltaire, with an eye ever upon France, was correcting his old works and composing new. Maupertuis, as we see in his correspondence with the king, was employed in directing the investigations of the Berlin Academy, and in making the results accessible in annual reports. D'Argens was always writing or compiling; the bold La Mettrie had usually some new work upon the anvil; and Darget was the king's intelligent, assiduous assistant.

All these busy laborers were freed from that primal, eldest curse of intellectual workmen, — the necessity of wasting vital force in earning their subsistence. Here, for once, the outward circumstances and the inward longings seemed to be in harmony; and, in truth, every advanced community might, with incalculable advantage to itself, set free its twenty or its forty most fruitful minds from the necessity of that cruel waste, if only it were possible to select them. Probably it is not possible.

The astute reader knows very well that these companions of a king could not long be a happy family. The nature of

things was against them. Sans-Souci proved to be a monastery without the austerities, the discipline, the routine, the learned ignorance, which render monastic life endurable.

The scenes of his reception being at an end, Voltaire soon recovered from his honey-moon illusions, to find that he had made a great mistake in abandoning Paris and the freedom of his own house. In three months he was so well convinced of this as to half confess it to his niece, and thus expose himself to a triumphant I-told-you-so from that positive lady. "The King of Prussia will be the death of you," she had predicted in August, 1750. November 6th of the same year he was in a mood to write that famous letter of *buts*, which, from its oddity, catches the eye of one who turns over the volume of his letters of this year:—

"They know, then, at Paris, my dear child, that we have played 'La Mort de César' at Potsdam; that Prince Henri is a good actor, has no accent, and is very amiable; and that there is such a thing as pleasure here? All that is true; *but!* — The king's suppers are delicious; we talk reason, wit, science; liberty reigns at the table; he is the soul of all that; no bad humor, no clouds, at least no storms. My life is free and occupied; *but — but!* Operas, comedies, carousals, suppers at Sans-Souci, parades, concerts, studies, lectures; *but — but!* The city of Berlin, spacious, much more airy than Paris, palaces, theatres, affable queens, charming princesses, maids of honor beautiful and well formed, the house of Lady Tyrconnell always full, and sometimes too full; *but — but!* My dear child, the weather begins to grow a little cool.

. . . . "Maupertuis springs are not very easy; he takes my dimensions hardly with his quadrant. It is said that a little envy enters into his problems. In recompense, there is here too gay a man; it is La Mettrie. His ideas are fire-works always in the form of sky-rockets. His chatter is amusing for half a quarter of an hour, and mortally tiresome longer. He has just made, without knowing it, a bad book, printed at Potsdam, in which he proscribes virtue and remorse, eulogizes the vices, invites his reader to disorderly living, all without bad intention. There are in his work a thousand brilliant touches, and not half a page of reason; they are like flashes of lightning in the night. Some sensible people concluded to remonstrate with him upon the enormity of his moral lessons. He was simply astonished; he did not know what he had written; he will write the contrary tomorrow, if it is desired. God keep me from taking him for my doctor! He would give me corrosive sublimate instead of rhubarb, very inno-

cently, and then begin to laugh. This strange doctor is the king's reader, and the best of it is that he is at present reading to him the 'History of the Church.' He goes over hundreds of pages of it, and there are places where monarch and reader are ready to choke with laughing.

"Adieu, my dear child. So they want to play 'Rome Sauvée' at Paris? *But — but!* Adieux; I embrace you with all my heart."

What had happened, then? Several disagreeable things had happened or were beginning. Frederic II. was master in his own house; but the most submissive household finds methods of relieving the suppression of its will. Frederic was king; but Prince Henri was heir presumptive. The king doted upon Voltaire; what more natural than that the prince and the queens should make much of Baculard d'Arnaud, a "rising sun," like the prince himself? It was Baculard who caused the first shadow to fall upon the new-found Elysium. The head of that young man was by this time completely turned. The king's compliments, the sudden fortune, the equally sudden celebrity, the assiduous attentions of part of the court, had totally bewildered him, and he knew no longer what nor where he was. He was committing a series of incredible follies; and it is not from Voltaire alone that we learn this. For some years before leaving Paris he had been under the surveillance of the police. The report of the detective who was commissioned to keep an eye upon him contains this item: —

"March 20, 1750, the King of Prussia sent him two thousand francs for his journey [to Berlin]; but, having spent the money, he has been obliged to sell all his works to Durand for fifty louis, in order to be able to start." [1]

The rest of his conduct, Voltaire assures us, was of a piece with this beginning. On arriving at Berlin by the coach, without attendant, he gave himself out for a "lord, who had lost upon the road his title-deeds of nobility, his poems, and the portraits of his mistresses, the whole wrapped up in a night-cap." Being an inveterate spender and borrower, he complained of the insufficiency of his pension, and of his not having been invited to the king's suppers; at the same time, he wrote to Paris that the queens "snatched him from one an-

[1] 2 Histoire de la Détention des Philosophes et des Gens de Lettres à la Bastille et à Vincennes. Par J. Delort. Page 151.

other," that he was tired of supping with them, that he often declined their invitations, and that he meant to use his favor in promoting the interests of artists and men of letters.

The ladies of the court had indeed paid him much attention. If the king had a poet, could not the queens have one? Moreover, as the police report describes him, he was "thirty-two; large, well-formed, blonde, and of an effeminate air." His boastful letters to Paris, therefore, were a not altogether unpardonable explosion of inflated vanity. But he did worse than boast of ladies' favor. He conceived an infuriate jealousy of Voltaire, his "father" and benefactor. It was Voltaire, he thought, who kept him from being invited to the king's suppers, and he allowed his pen and tongue unbridled license in descanting upon the character of the man to whom he owed his advancement. Before leaving France, D'Arnaud had written, for a Rouen edition of Voltaire's works in seven volumes, a preface of considerable extent, giving an interesting sketch of the author's life, for which Voltaire had supplied anecdotes, parts of letters, and morsels of verse. The performance having the usual fault of being excessively eulogistic, Voltaire had drawn his pen through some of the passages most open to this objection, and sent it thus amended to the publisher. Afterwards, he forbade its use, and the publisher composed a preface of his own, in which allusions were made to Voltaire's change of abode. These allusions were reported to D'Arnaud as being hostile to France, or disrespectful to its government, and such as might injure the reputed author of the preface and prevent his return to his native land. He leaped to the conclusion that Voltaire had himself inserted these offensive passages in the original preface; and, without waiting to ascertain the fact, he wrote to Fréron, disavowing them; to Fréron, "the worm engendered in the carcass of Desfontaines," conspicuously Voltaire's enemy, and the leader of the faction hostile to him! It was a clear case of going over to the enemy, and it was done at noonday, in the gaze of both armies. The D'Argentals were deeply moved, and the count dispatched to Voltaire a letter of burning indignation.

"I ask your pardon [he wrote] in advance, my dear friend, for the letter which I am about to write to you, in which I shall speak to you of Baculard d'Arnaud. It is a contemptible subject, very un-

interesting; and, down to the present moment, I have disdained to handle it. But this man has rendered himself famous after the fashion of Erostratus; he obliges me to break silence, and to reveal him to you completely. I had the worst opinion of him long ago. Besides regarding him as mediocre in talent and intellect, superior in falsehood, fatuity, and folly, I was aware that at the time when he was receiving favors from you he used to speak of you in an unworthy manner. Half from contempt for the man, half from pity for his poverty, I neglected to inform you of it. At length I learned, with the greatest surprise, that a very great king had deigned to invite him to his court. I could not help rejoicing at the chance which delivered you from him, and I took care not to advise you to oppose his going. I did not then foresee your own departure, and that, in removing yourself from the literary insects which swarm at Paris, you would find one at Berlin so much more dangerous from your being convinced of his attachment to you, which was your due for so many reasons. Since you have been in Prussia, there is no kind of impertinence which he has not written about you, and he has crowned his proceedings by a letter which is a tissue of calumny, baseness, and ingratitude. He has dared to write — to whom? To Fréron! He says that, after having made him compose a preface for the Rouen edition, you thought proper to add to it some passages so grave and of such great importance that he is neither able nor willing to adopt them, since he is a good Frenchman, and it is not his intention to expatriate himself, as you have done! This frightful calumny is one of the most stupid and maladroit, since it is refuted by the preface itself, which several persons have seen, and which others will still see. But you cannot imagine the noise which this tale has made. After having been spread abroad in the cafés and other tripods, it has forced its way into respectable houses. Fréron made a trophy of the letter of this wretch, and was going to give it full publicity. It is true that he has received a second letter, in which Baculard, touched with repentance and not with remorse, tells him not to show the first letter any more, and that the preface of the edition was the bookseller's own work."

This tells the story; which, however, Voltaire had already heard from other sources. The court was then at Potsdam, deep in private theatricals, to be given in the apartments of Prince Henri, who was fond of exercising his talent as an actor. D'Arnaud, always in favor with the prince, was cast in the same plays with Voltaire. Upon receiving this intelligence from Paris, he found it impossible to continue on rehearsing terms with the rising sun, and so informed

the king. "Can I," he wrote, "act at Prince Henri's with D'Arnaud, who overwhelms me with so much ingratitude and perfidy? It is impossible. But I am unwilling to cause the least *éclat;* believing rather that I ought to preserve in all this business a profound silence. It seems to me, sire, that if D'Arnaud, who is going to-day to Berlin in one of Prince Henri's carriages, should remain there to work, to attend the Academy, on any pretext, I should thereby be delivered from the extreme embarrassment in which I find myself. His absence would put an end to the bickerings without number which dishonor the palace of glory and the sweetest asylum of repose."

It so chanced that the king had a copy of the original preface in question, which he now read again, and he seems to have taken the behavior of D'Arnaud into consideration. He could not but discover that he had been hasty in inviting the young poet, and he perceived that if he meant to keep the peace in his house he must make a choice between a rising and a setting orb. D'Arnaud, as it seems, fancied the prince and the queens could protect him, and he asked his discharge from the king's service, perhaps not with the customary submission. The king replied by ordering him to leave Berlin within twenty-four hours.

Imagine all this done, as it were, in the presence of Europe: Paris very attentive; Piron, Fréron, Boyer, the D'Argentals, in agitation; all the cafés astir; Berlin excited; the queens in sympathy with their large, blonde, persecuted young poet; the court more deferential to Voltaire than before; and that personage somewhat dismayed at his own triumph. The rising sun was in eclipse; *but* might not the same fate befall a setting sun also? A breath hath made them, and a breath unmakes!

D'Arnaud withdrew to Dresden, where, as Frederic had many enemies, the young man found many friends, by whom he was still befooled. "I have here a whole people for my friends," he wrote from Dresden, "who take pleasure in avenging me of that scoundrel, V." But all things and men find their level in time. He soon wore out this extravagant welcome, and returned to France, where he lived to extreme old age, an industrious writer. Ten years later, he sent

one of his poems to Voltaire, with a letter, in which he resumed the tone of "an affectionate pupil," who "delighted to render homage to his master," and attributed his loss of that master's friendship to the "calumnies" of his enemies. Doubtless he was more foolish than base, and his abrupt dismissal seems as harsh as his sudden elevation was ill-judged. But such is personal government. His fate furnishes one more case in point to those who think that literature could not be really promoted by exempting persons who exercise it from the ordinary conditions.

The blonde, large Baculard was gone from the Elysium he had disturbed. Prince Henri remained, and it was he who again interrupted the peace of the elder poet. Wherever Voltaire went, he carried with him, and *meant* to keep under lock and key, "La Pucelle," to which he still added lines and cantos, and which he still read to ladies whom he wished particularly to oblige. He had read portions of it to the queen-mother and one of her daughters, the queen regarding it as a satire upon the Roman church. "I remember," he wrote afterwards to the Duchess of Saxe-Gotha, another friend of Jeanne, "reading that bagatelle to the queen-mother at Berlin, in the presence of the Princess Amelia, who was hidden in a corner, and lost not her share." [1] The king was so bewitched by the work that he wrote his "Palladium," a burlesque poem in six books, in weak but obvious imitation of it. Prince Henri had an extreme desire, not merely to read, but to possess a copy of "La Pucelle;" and, to that end consulted D'Arnaud, just before the abrupt departure of that young man for Dresden. Between them they corrupted an amanuensis whom Voltaire had picked up on his travels, and who now, for a few gold pieces, copied the poem for the prince, sitting up at night for the purpose. Voltaire discovered the infidelity, dismissed the copyist, complained to the prince, and explained to him the disagreeable consequences that would follow its publication. Prince Henri swore that the copy should never, never leave his possession. "It is only a prince's oath, I grant," the poet wrote to his niece; "but he is an honest man. In short, he is amiable; he has seduced me; I am weak; and I have left Jeanne in his possession. But if ever a mishap occurs, if a

[1] Voltaire à Ferney, page 142.

second copy is made, where shall I hide? The poem of 'La Pucelle' does not harmonize with my age and the 'Age of Louis XIV.'" For a while he was in alarm lest D'Arnaud should have carried off a copy to Dresden for publication, which would have been death to his dearest hopes; but the fear proved groundless. Every letter he wrote to Paris intimates revealed a longing to return. This very letter to his niece concludes thus: "Above all things, take care of our little theatre. I count always upon seeing it again. Ah, we have to live upon hope."

He was liable to mishaps of this nature from his precipitation in engaging copyists. Tinois, who played him the ill-turn with the prince, he had taken into his service for no other reason than that he could write a compliment in verse. Passing through Reims, he had occasion for another copy of his "Rome Sauvée," and employed Tinois to do the work. The copyist, who read the play before copying it, sent the author a stanza to the effect that, at last, four characters were completely revealed to a discriminating public: —

> "Chacun reconnaitra, par les coups du pinceau,
> César, Catilina, Cicéron, et Voltaire."[1]

Pleased with the young man's *esprit*, he engaged him as factotum. Longchamp has told us what opportunities such a person had of abusing his trust.

Tinois was succeeded by a young Frenchman named Richier, a teacher of languages, resident in Berlin, who also proved something less than faithful, and involved Voltaire in a painful manner with the illustrious Lessing. At this time, Lessing, twenty-two years of age, was unknown, lived in a Berlin garret, and eked out his subsistence as best he could by translating, teaching, and copying. One of his few friends in Berlin was Richier, who in due time procured for him the keenly desired pleasure of an introduction to Voltaire, who received him with his wonted urbanity, and gave him some work in translating from the German. They became very good friends, young Lessing having for the veteran author the generous admiration which young men who have it in them to do something naturally cherish for men who have done something.

[1] Every one will recognize, by the strokes of the brush, Cæsar, Catiline, Cicero, and Voltaire.

From Richier he heard all about the wondrous "Age of Louis XIV.," upon which Voltaire was busy in 1750 and 1751, one volume of which, ready for the printer, lay among his papers as early as December, 1750. Lessing entreated Richier to lend him the precious volume to read, which Richier did, and Lessing took it home with him. It was a fault in both, only pardonable to their youth. Soon after, Lessing, leaving Berlin without intention to return, was so inconceivably thoughtless as to take the volume with him! On discovering the fact, can we wonder that Voltaire should have been equally alarmed and indignant? He was alarmed because he had already made arrangements for its publication, and naturally supposed that the copy could have been taken only for publication elsewhere, either in French or in German. He compelled his secretary to write to Lessing, demanding the immediate return of the manuscript. No answer arriving at the time expected, he wrote himself to Lessing a letter so polite and reasonable that it is difficult for us to understand how it could have left an ill impression.

"You have already been written to, monsieur, to pray you to return the copy which was taken from me and placed in your hands. I am aware that it could not be confided to a man less capable of misusing it, and more capable of translating it well. But as I have since much corrected the work, and as I have caused to be inserted more than forty leaves, you would do me considerable wrong to translate it in the state in which you have it. You would do me even a much greater one if you were to print the book in French; you would ruin M. de Francheville [king's printer at Berlin], who is a very worthy man and the publisher of this work. You feel that he would be obliged to make his complaint public, and to submit it to the magistrates of Saxony. Nothing could more injure you and more certainly close the door of fortune to you. I should be extremely afflicted if the least negligence on your part, in this matter, should reduce M. de Francheville to the cruel necessity of rendering his complaint public. . . . . I shall be very well satisfied not only that you translate the book into German, but that you cause it to appear in Italian, as you proposed. I will send you the entire work, with all the additions and all the necessary explanations, and I will recompense with pleasure the good faith with which you will give me back what I again ask of you. Unfortunately, it is known at Berlin that it was my secretary, Richier, who committed this theft. I shall do what I can to avoid ruining the

guilty person, and I shall even pardon him on your making the restitution which I expect from you. Have the goodness to send me the parcel by post-wagon, and count upon my gratitude."

No sooner had this epistle been dispatched than the manuscript arrived, with a jocular note from Lessing to the secretary, apologizing for having taken it away. Few men who have even so much as copied a volume with the pen could think Lessing's jests well timed: "On leaving Berlin I had still four leaves to read. Put yourself in my place before pronouncing against me. Why is not M. de Voltaire like an ordinary compiler, whose works one can lay down at any place?" Voltaire dismissed the secretary; and Lessing, on hearing of it, wrote to Voltaire a letter of remonstrance in Latin, which has not been preserved. It is an instance of the force of prejudice that this affair, in which Voltaire was so clearly the party sinned against, is related by a German author as though he were the only party sinning.[1]

Lessing could never forgive Voltaire for thinking him capable of making a base use of the borrowed volume. But what else could an author think who had been the prey of copyists and publishers for twice Lessing's life-time, and who could have known little of Lessing's honorable character from their short, unequal acquaintance?

[1] Life and Works of G. E. Lessing, from the German of Adolph Stahr. By E. P. Evans, vol. i., p. 106. Boston, 1866.

CHAPTER III.

VOLTAIRE VERSUS HIRSCH & SON.

THESE affairs were all extremely disagreeable, but they were of trifling importance compared with the prodigious and resounding scandal that now demands our notice, — the lawsuit between the author of the romantic "Zaïre" and a firm of Berlin jewelers, Israelites not without guile. This case supplied the supper-tables of Europe with an enlivening topic for many weeks, and compelled the King of Prussia to regret the hour that sealed his bargain with his new French tutor.

The suit would have been reckoned scandalous in Berlin without reference to its merits, merely because Abraham Hirsch was a Jew; for one point of agreement between Lutheran and Catholic was an abhorrence of the people whom Christians had conscientiously despoiled and degraded for fifteen centuries. The case is extremely difficult to elucidate, because of some of the most material points the evidence is either insufficient or contradictory; and hence the story has never been, and probably never will be, told twice alike.

Ninety-nine miles south of Berlin is agreeable Dresden, the capital of Saxony, then misgoverned by the Elector Augustus, son of "Augustus the physically strong." This elector, taking a leaf from the book of John Law, had established a kind of bank in Dresden, and caused it to issue an inordinate quantity of notes, a million and a half of francs in nominal value. The currency of Saxony was inflated; for a time a note of one hundred thalers was worth but fifty. At the close of the Silesian war, during which Frederic of Prussia was sometimes master of Dresden, that king was in a position to impose terms of peace upon Augustus. An article of the treaty of Dresden required that Prussian subjects holding these depreciated bills should be paid in full, which proved a hard condition indeed for the elector. A piece of paper in a Saxon's hands

was worth fifty thalers, and the same piece of paper held by a Prussian was worth one hundred! Speculative Prussians bought these notes in great numbers, and, on presenting them at the Dresden bank, received their nominal value. For three years Augustus was obliged to submit to this drain upon his resources; but in 1748, the King of Prussia, yielding to his remonstrances, prohibited the traffic, and forbade the importation of the notes into his dominions. Nothing is more probable, however, than that the speculation was still carried on in secret by Prussian subjects.

Voltaire, as we know, had been accustomed from his youth up to amuse himself by turning to his own advantage the financial straits of kings and ministers, and we also know that a propensity of this kind does not grow weaker with advancing age. Rich as he was, he still nursed his fortune, and not without reason. Events soon proved that there was no final refuge for him on earth but one which his own tact and force could make, supply, and defend. The very wages of his professional labor were a prey to every printer in Europe who chose to join in the scramble for them. But in speculating in these Dresden depreciated notes he committed the great error of forgetting for a moment where he was. He had left the land of royal mistresses and ministerial jobs. He was in a country where men usually told the truth, and where the government was an integer. He was in Prussia under Frederic II., not in France under Boyer, Pompadour, and Maurepas.

It was as early as November, 1750, when he had been in his new country little more than four months, that he cast his eye upon this luckless Dresden speculation, — one of his very few failures in an affair of business. He had been in the habit of hiring diamonds and other splendors from the jewelers Hirsch, father and son, for the theatricals in Prince Henri's rooms. The younger Hirsch sometimes brought the gems himself from Berlin to Potsdam, and, probably, stayed over night and carried them back the next day. Between them (though which proposed the scheme cannot be known) the poet and the jeweler appear to have arranged a speculation in Dresden paper; Voltaire to supply the capital, and young Hirsch to go to Dresden and buy the notes, then selling in Saxony at thirty-five per cent. discount. The pretext of

Hirsch's journey was to be a purchase of jewels and furs in the Saxon capital, where, indeed, both himself and his father had had business of that nature. This fine project was discussed and completely arranged in Voltaire's rooms in the royal palace at Potsdam, exactly over the king's own apartment, quite in the manner of Versailles.

Hirsch claims to have been the innocent victim of Voltaire's wiles. He says that he objected to the scheme on the ground that commerce of that nature might displease the king. "Upon which," continues the jeweler, "Voltaire protested that he was too prudent to undertake anything without the consent of his majesty; on the contrary, if I acquitted myself well of the commission, and procured him some notes at thirty-five per cent. discount, I could surely count upon his protection." The young man undertook the commission, and Voltaire supplied him with the requisite funds: a bill of exchange upon Paris for forty thousand francs; another upon a Berlin broker, named Ephraim, for four thousand crowns; a third, of four thousand four hundred crowns, upon the father of Hirsch, — the whole being of the value of about eighty-five thousand francs. As security, Hirsch deposited with Voltaire diamonds valued at eighteen thousand four hundred and thirty crowns.

Hirsch went back to Berlin, with these notes in his pocket. He lost time in Berlin, to Voltaire's extreme distress and disappointment. He lingered a whole week, and then started only at his principal's urgent desire. At Dresden he raised the money on his Paris bill, and proceeded to trade, as it seems, on his own account, deferring or evading the business upon which he was sent. He wrote unsatisfactory letters, to the effect that the price of the Dresden notes had risen in value, and could not be had at the seductive discount of thirty-five per cent. If he bought some for himself, he bought none for Voltaire, made no tolerable explanation, and, at length, Voltaire wrote to Paris, protesting his bill of exchange, and so informed the dilatory, speculative Hirsch. This decisive step brought the young man quickly back to Potsdam, where he assumed the injured merchant, and demanded compensation for time and labor, and, still more, for the great injury done to his credit in having sold a bill of exchange which

the drawer protested. He had been obliged to restore the money received for it at Dresden, and now held a worthless piece of paper; which, however, he took care to keep in his strong-box at Berlin. It might be of use, he seems to have thought, in extorting from his principal a liberal reward. The mere fact of Abraham Hirsch's holding a document of the kind, signed François Arouet de Voltaire, was one which the king's friend would not care to have known.

Voltaire received him blandly, being by this time fully resolved to drop the speculation, and annihilate all trace and record of it. He agreed at once to compensate his agent for all losses, and, by way of bringing the business to a handsome conclusion which would close the mouths of Hirsch and son, he proposed to buy a part of the jewels left with him as security. He had worn some of them upon his chamberlain's cross; they had glittered upon his person when he played Cicero in "Rome Sauvée;" and, besides, he was a man who always had money to invest. A thoughtless world does not, perhaps, sufficiently sympathize with the embarrassment of rich people, who are always having quantities of money coming in which they know not what to do with. At Paris Voltaire would have known; but in Prussia, where he did not mean to stay very long, his money was a burden to him. They came to an amicable and, as both of them thought, a final agreement. Hirsch engaged to restore all the unused bills received from Voltaire, and to pay to him two hundred and eighty gold fredericks as the balance due after deducting the price of the diamonds. He expressly engaged to return the bill upon Paris, now valueless, except for purposes of mischief.

The jeweler went home to Berlin well content, promising to return in a day or two with his golden fredericks, when he hoped to receive the "liberal compensation" vaguely promised for his loss and labor. He came. But, alas, they failed to agree. During the interval, Voltaire had shown the diamonds to Ephraim, a Berlin competitor of Hirsch, from whom he derived the impression that they were egregiously overvalued. The "brave Major Chasot" had received them from an elderly duchess, and the brave major had sold them very cheap to Hirsch, who had now put them off upon Voltaire at an enormous profit. So said competitor Ephraim, and Voltaire be-

lieved him. When, therefore, the question of compensation came up for settlement, the difference was extreme between Hirsch's expectation and Voltaire's estimate. Hirsch expected at least two thousand francs; Voltaire offered something less than two hundred.

So far the case is sufficiently clear, though the evidence is fragmentary, slight, and inadequate. But, from this point onward, the acutest sifter of testimony cannot follow the details with certainty. Even Mr. Carlyle's fiery patience seems at fault. Clouds of smoke cover the battle-ground, the earth shakes, there is a deafening noise, the sun goes down upon the victor in possession of the field; but no man, by the most diligent questioning, can ascertain the vicissitudes of the long day. One thing is certain: Voltaire was *sure* the jeweler meant to extort excessive profit from him by keeping the Paris bill. Hirsch would not bring back the bill. He came, he went, he came again, he came often, but never brought it with him. We dimly see Voltaire trying to conciliate him by buying more jewels, as well as some articles of costly furniture. There were scenes, as Hirsch testifies, of infuriate French violence between them: the poet chasing the jeweler around the room, snatching a ring from his finger, shaking his fist in his face, and thrusting him out of the door. At last, after several fruitless interviews, finding him rising in his demands and deaf to all reasonable compromise, he brought suit against the dealer in diamonds, and had him arrested on a criminal charge. For a day or two Hirsch was in prison, from which he was released on bail, and the cause came to trial.

Voltaire's accusation, in effect, was this: "I *lent* a large sum of money to this young man; I lent it to facilitate *his* commerce at Dresden in furs and jewels. He refuses to settle with me according to written agreement. He keeps back a bill of exchange on Paris, and he greatly overvalues some diamonds which I took from him in part payment."

Hirsch replied in substance: "No, he *sent* me to Dresden to buy depreciated notes for *him*. The diamonds were not over-valued by me; but he has changed some of them, putting several small and inferior stones in place of my large and fine ones. I did not sign the statement produced by the plaintiff.

That is, I mean that he altered the papers that passed between us *after* I had signed them, so that their meaning was materially changed to his advantage."

The whole city was astir. The men who were jealous of Voltaire's favor, and those who regarded poets as Frederic's father had regarded them, encouraged and abetted the jeweler. In the midst of the sessions of the court they assisted him to compose an "Appeal to the Public," which contains his version of the story. According to this Appeal, the enraged poet was so determined not to submit to what he deemed imposition that he sought justice in irregular ways. He beguiled the junior partner into furnishing merchandise enough to make their account even, and then refused to pay for it.

"The Sieur Voltaire [he said] shut up the mirror [supplied by Hirsch & Son] in his chamber, and told me he would neither pay me for the rings nor the mirror, but that he would keep them to indemnify himself for the too hasty bargain which he pretended he had made with me before, although the brilliants for which he gave three thousand crowns had been valued by M. Reclam before the agreement was concluded. At the same time he forcibly took a ring from my finger in the palace. His servant, named Picard, was present. He afterward shut the door in my face, and bade me go and complain where I pleased.

"On the morrow Voltaire came with a lieutenant-colonel [Chasot] in the king's service, desired him to judge between us, and entreated him to bring me to his house. Scarcely had I entered, when Voltaire, in the presence of the lieutenant-colonel, pursued me about the chamber, seized me by the throat, calling me a knave, and told me I did not know the person with whom I had to do. He added that he had the power to throw me into a dungeon for the remainder of my life, but that his clemency would pardon my crimes, if I would take back the brilliants which I had sold him, and restore the three thousand crowns and all the writings that had passed between us. I replied that this could not be; and added that he would not have bought the brilliants if he had not found the purchase to his advantage, and the more especially as they had been valued previous to the purchase.

"Voltaire in his fury would have done me damage, and I left the chamber to go and lay my complaints before his majesty. Highly angry at the proceedings of Voltaire, the king sent me to the high chancellor, with orders to judge the cause with rigorous impartiality. I have already confronted the Sieur Voltaire at two sittings. His servant Picard has already on oath given him the lie relative to his

denial of having taken the ring by force. I summon him to produce the agreements that were made between us, and he affirms that he has no agreements, but that he entrusted the sum of eighteen thousand and thirty crowns to me without requiring the least security, — which is very like the act of Voltaire!

"He farther affirms that he gave me this sum to purchase diamonds and furs at Dresden, at the current price, and at the rate of thirty-five crowns each. I proved to him, by various notes and orders in his own handwriting, that everything I have advanced is truth, and he is daring enough to reply that these notes and orders were snatched up by me, after he had thrown them into the fire. I gave him a bill, which begins, 'I have sold the following articles to Mr., etc.' and he has rewritten all the lines, that the writing might resemble his, and has added, at the top of the bills, 'for the payment of three thousand crowns stipulated by me.' This laconic style was fitted to the small space which was left at the top of the bill, where he has erased the accent of the *e* from the word *taxé*, and has added *ables* to make the words *brillans taxables*. He could not act in like manner by the word *estimé*, because it was too near the words that follow. This contradiction, the style, the different color of the ink, the lame form of the letters, and the beginning of the phrase *J'ai vendu* by a capital *J* sufficiently attest his crime.

"I present the certificate which accompanied the diamonds that were sent to be valued by Reclam, and this he dares to disavow. He produces another valuation, which was made by five workmen, all of whom are persons who work only for Ephraim, and who have taxed the bill according to the orders given them by Ephraim. Just and respectable public, what ought my claims to be? To you I appeal. Forget for a moment the immortal works of the poet and the philosopher, and do you pronounce sentence."

Thus wrote the jeweler. He presents in this paper all of his case except the charge that his antagonist had changed some of the diamonds, which was probably an after-thought. The cause came to final trial in February, 1751. German authors commend the judges who heard and decided it for their skill and thoroughness; and the king, as we know, refrained from interference. The court condemned the jeweler on every point charged or claimed by Voltaire. It decided, first of all, that the purpose for which the plaintiff had advanced the money was no part of the case; it was not the court's business. Every man in Berlin knew that purpose;

for the speculation in Dresden paper was a thing which had been all too familiar for six years to the people of the Prussian capital. The court ordered Hirsch to restore the bill of exchange upon Paris. All the receipts and other papers appertaining to the cause were to be either destroyed or legally canceled. It was decided further that the diamonds in question should be valued by experienced jewelers on their oaths, and paid for at the price fixed by them. With regard to the charge that some of the jewels had been changed by Voltaire for stones of inferior value, that was ground for another suit, which Hirsch was at liberty to bring. Finally, as to the document said to have been altered by the plaintiff after its execution, the court made a twofold decision. It fined Hirsch ten thalers for denying that he had signed it; and it required Voltaire to make affidavit, in legal form, that he had not changed the wording of the paper, as charged.

This paper, rendered so famous by the trial, has since been reproduced in *fac simile*, both in Germany and in France.[1] Magnifying glasses of various powers have been brought to bear upon it. The *fac simile* affords the inquirer no help whatever. We see plainly enough the interlineations and alterations, which were evidently done after the paper was drawn; but who can prove to us that they were done after the paper was *signed?* Voltaire was the son of a skillful notary; he was himself one of the most adroit and successful men of business then living; his own very large and always increasing property was represented by paper and parchment; and, hence, if he committed this crime he knew better than most men its nature and its extent. The court was asked to believe that he had sat down at his desk in secrecy, and *deliberately* perpetrated the most bungling, artless, illiterate forgery conceivable, which converted the document into a tissue of absurd contradictions. A difference in the color of the ink has been observed in the original, which could not be transferred to a printed *fac simile;* but evidence of that nature has been justly excluded by the courts. Dip your pen into an ordinary inkstand to the usual depth, and you will have in your pen ink of a certain shade; but if you dip it to the muddy bottom, you are quite likely to have ink of another shade and

[1] See Voltaire et Frédéric, par Gustave Desnoiresterres, page 138.

quality. At this distance of time, we are justified in setting aside an accusation to which a Berlin court of justice allowed so little weight, when it had the parties, the witnesses, and the documents all before it.

Here the case might have been expected to end. Voltaire declared himself ready and eager to take the oath, and sent to the court a notice to that effect, with a request that the valuation of the jewels might be proceeded with. But now, as we gather from various indications, his friends interfered, and implored him to conclude the wretched business with all possible haste. The elder Hirsch, it was reported in Berlin, was mortally sick with anxiety and chagrin. Voltaire himself was worn down by ten weeks of intense agitation. The king was in a rage of disgust. The valuation would consume time. For these reasons he again offered to compromise the matter with the jeweler, who again saw his advantage, and still hungered for profit. After much obscure haggling, there appears to have been a kind of settlement between them, Voltaire consenting to a loss of about three thousand francs. Nevertheless, for unknown reasons, the affair lingered, or some fag end of it lingered, all through that year; for as late as December, 1751, there are allusions to it in Voltaire's letters to Darget, as if it were not yet quite settled.

Nor was the defendant disposed to silence, for he seems to have equaled Voltaire in the faculty of persistence. The elder Hirsch died about the time of the trial, and his son assured the public that the sick and feeble old man came to his death solely through the agitation caused by this affair. "Pardon, indulgent public," he exclaims, — "pardon expressions dictated by the affliction of an unhappy youth, who, in consequence of the cruel vengeance of Voltaire against the unfortunate son, has lately lost what was dearest to him in the whole world, a father who was tenderly beloved by his children, of whom he alone constituted the happiness! . . . . My sudden imprisonment by the guards, contrived by Voltaire without the knowledge of the high chancellor, was as suddenly the death of this father." No, not *as* suddenly; nor was the arrest contrived without the knowledge of the high chancellor, Bismarck. The young man made the most of his father's death: "Will M. de Voltaire still continue so void of feeling as not to hear

the complaints and cries of several orphans, and to behold the tears, the mournful affliction, the desolation, the despair, of a whole family?" The jeweler and his advisers were abundant and not ineffective in their appeals to "a just and penetrating public."

Amid much outcry like this the plaintiff in the case tried to believe that he was a victor in the sorry contest. He gained his cause, indeed, but without recovering prestige; while his antagonist lost his cause, and gained his object. Many a worse man would have pacified the stout and resolute young jeweler by the sacrifice of several diamonds; but, as Marmontel has told us, and as the reader has often seen, Voltaire had a constitutional persistence which made it all but impossible for him to purchase peace by submitting to what he deemed imposition.

CHAPTER IV.

THE KING OF PRUSSIA'S DISGUST.

Of all living men Frederic II. of Prussia was the one most profoundly disgusted with this affair. What could he say to those who had murmured at his extravagant favor to this foreign poet? What could he think now of his *fou?*

His first impulse was to order away the setting sun, as he had just ordered away the rising sun. "Write," said he to Darget, "that I wish him gone from my dominions in twenty-four hours." The secretary, well affected toward Voltaire, was extremely agitated, and did not write. The king repeated the order, and still Darget hesitated, as if waiting to see if the king really meant to adopt a measure so extreme. Then Frederic, a little calmed, asked him what he thought of the matter. "Sire," replied the secretary, "you invited him to your court. The cause is about to be tried. If he is adjudged guilty, there will still be time to send him away." The king was silent a moment, and then said, "You are right; you are a good fellow." [1]

But he would not admit to his presence the plaintiff in the case of Voltaire *v.* Hirsch. During most of the first two months of the year 1751, while the affair was proceeding, Voltaire was in Berlin, an inmate of the royal palace, the king being much of the time at Potsdam, and there was no personal intercourse between them. The cause was adjudged February 18, 1751; but the king was not softened. He cared little for the merits of the case, and would not hear it spoken of. That Voltaire should have had *any* confidential transactions with a Jew would have sufficed to disgust him; for we see on many a page of Frederic's works that he accepted the division of a community into fixed ranks and classes as part of the essential order of nature. In his eyes, free as he was from

[1] Duverney, chapter xv.

some prejudices, a Jew was among the lowest of the low. A Jew's oath was not yet received in any Prussian court against a Christian's. But *such* a transaction! and after he had provided so bountifully for all Voltaire's possible needs! Thus the favorite, nominal victor as he was, remained "in the king's disgrace," and sat in the Berlin palace, miserably sick, melancholy, and ashamed; owning to himself, as erring mortals are apt to do, all the extent of his folly, when all the world saw it also.

In every trouble of his life he had one sure resource,— his work. He plodded on, he and his new secretary, with the "Age of Louis XIV.," and resolved to get out into the country on the opening of the spring, in some quiet house near Potsdam, where he could recover his health and pursue his vocation. But, first, he must appease the king. After the decision of the cause, he ventured upon writing a penitential letter: —

"Ah, yes, sire, your majesty is right; no one in the world could be more so; and, at my age, I am damaged almost past repair. I have never corrected myself of the cursed idea of always getting beforehand in all affairs; and, although well persuaded that there are a thousand occasions when it is necessary to submit to loss in silence, and although I have had experience of it, I had the rage to wish to prove myself in the right against a man with whom it is not permitted even to be in the right. Believe that I am in despair, and that I have never felt a grief so profound and so bitter. I have recklessly deprived myself of the only object for which I came here; I have lost the communings of spirit which enlightened and cheered me; I have displeased the only man whom I wish to please. If the Queen of Sheba had lost the favor of Solomon, she would not have suffered more than I."

To this letter the king does not appear to have replied. Voltaire sought the aid of the friendly Darget, through whom he asked the king's permission to retire to a country house near Potsdam, until the spring, when he wished to visit Paris, that he might put his business there into permanent order. He asked to be allowed to relinquish his Prussian pension, "in order to prove that the king himself was his only object;" not gain, not glory. Then he wrote a longer letter, in a firmer tone, recalling events of the last six months, such as the

theft of "La Pucelle" and the conduct of D'Arnaud, in which he had clearly not been the party offending. He denied the Dresden speculation. He said that he had been openly solicited by the Jew Hirsch to take some of the notes, as other men were taking them; but, on learning their nature, he had canceled his order, protested his bill of exchange, and forbidden the broker to buy one of them on his account; and, in fact, he had never had one in his possession. He mentioned the name of the Berlin lawyer whom he had consulted on the occasion, and gave November 24th as the day on wh. ch he had protested his Paris bill.

The king answered this letter, February 24, 1751. He dealt roundly with his poet, writing in a strain that contrasts strongly with the fond letters of their early friendship.

"I was very glad to receive you into my house; I esteemed your intellect, your talents, your knowledge; and I thought that a man of your age, tired of fencing with authors and exposing himself to the storm, had come here to seek refuge as in a tranquil haven. But, at first, in a sufficiently singular manner, you demanded of me not to take Fréron as my literary correspondent. I had the weakness or the complaisance to yield the point to you, although it was not for you to decide whom I should take into my service. D'Arnaud was guilty of wrongs against you, which a generous man would have pardoned; a vindictive man pursues those whom he hates. At length, although D'Arnaud had given me no offense, it was on your account that he left this place. . . . . You have had the ugliest affair in the world with the Jew. You have caused a frightful turmoil throughout the whole city. The affair of the Saxon notes is so well known in Saxony, that grievous complaints have been forwarded to me concerning it. For my part, I kept the peace in my house until your arrival; and I notify you that if you have a passion to intrigue and cabal, you have come to the wrong man. I love pleasant and peaceable people, who do not put into their conduct the violent passions of tragedy. In case you can make up your mind to live like a philosopher, I shall be very glad to see you here; but if you abandon yourself to all the transports of your passions, and if you wish to be at odds with everybody, you will give me no pleasure by coming, and you can as well remain in Berlin."

This was severe, but it relieved the king's mind, and prepared the way for reconciliation. Voltaire replied at much length, successfully meeting some of the charges, but still appealing to the king's softer side.

"Sire, I entreat your majesty to substitute compassion for the favor which formerly enchanted me, and which determined me to pass at your feet the rest of my life. Although I have gained the suit, I have made another offer to that Jew to take back for two thousand crowns the diamonds which he sold me for three thousand, in order to be able to retire to the house which your majesty permits me to inhabit near Potsdam. . . . . I shall sacrifice everything to enjoy repose near the sojourn which you render so celebrated by all that you do there. Deign to leave me the hope that I shall see your last productions."

The king was relenting, but still kept the tone of the offended master. He wrote February 28th : —

" If you wish to come here, you are at liberty to do so. At this place I hear no suit spoken of, not even yours. Since you have gained it, I congratulate you, and I am very glad that this ugly affair is finished. I hope you will have no more quarrels, either with the Old or with the New Testament; compromises of that sort are withering, and, with the talents of the first genius of France, you will not cover the stains which such conduct will, in the long run, imprint upon your reputation. A bookseller Gosse [Jore], a violinist of the opera, a Jew jeweler are indeed people whose names, in no kind of business, ought to be found by the side of yours. I write this letter with the rough good sense of a German, who says what he thinks, without employing equivocal terms and weak ameliorations which disfigure the truth."

To Potsdam he was not going at present, but to the marquisate, near that royal abode, where he had hired a house, for which he was buying horses and some furniture. He wrote once more to the king, not omitting further mention of the suit, which the king would not hear of at Potsdam : —

" Sire, all things maturely considered, I committed a grave fault in having a suit against a Jew, and I ask pardon of your majesty, of your philosophy, and of your goodness. I was piqued ; I had a rage to prove that I had been deceived. I have proved it, and, after having gained this unfortunate suit, I have given to that cursed Hebrew more than I offered him at first to take back his cursed diamonds, which are not becoming to a man of letters. All that does not hinder that I consecrated my life to you. Do with me whatever you please. I

have written to her Royal Highness, the Margravine of Bayreuth, that Brother Voltaire was in penitence. Have pity upon Brother Voltaire. He is only waiting for the moment to come when he can go and bury himself in his cell at the marquisate. Believe, sire, that Brother Voltaire is a good-natured man; that he is on ill terms with no one; and, above all, that he takes the liberty of loving your majesty with all his heart. And to whom will you show the fruits of your beautiful genius, if not to your old admirer? . . . . I learn that your majesty permits me to establish myself for this spring at the marquisate. I render you for it most humble thanks; you are the consolation of my life."

At this time the king was consoling himself for the troubles of a royal lot by working upon his long poem, "The Art of War." He could not willingly dispense with the aid of such a critic at such a time, after getting him with so much difficulty; and this consideration, probably, had its influence in softening Frederic toward his *maître*. His next letter was quite in the old, familiar manner, though not expressed with his usual happiness. The royal poet wished to notify his master that the six cantos of his "Art of War" were ready for submission to the evening tripod: —

"I am just delivered of six at a birth, who ask to be baptized in Apollo's name in the waters of Hippocrene. 'La Henriade' is requested to be their godmother. You will have the goodness to bring her this evening, at five o'clock, into the apartment of the father. Darget-Lucine will be there, and the imagination of the 'Man-Machine' will hold the new-born children at the font."

Thus an appearance of harmony was restored, and Voltaire, as health returned, resumed his place at the king's table and his labors upon the king's works. His own work was rarely discontinued for a day; and now he sought to forget the miseries of this winter in laboring with renewed ardor and entire absorption upon his history of Louis XIV. We must cast a glance upon his work in Prussia, much of which was highly important, and continues current and vital to the present time.

CHAPTER V.

WORK IN PRUSSIA.

Among his earliest labors in Prussia was the learning of a little German. He felt it becoming to apologize to his friends for so doing, the German language being held in contempt by the king and the court, who knew, indeed, very little of it. "I have worked," he wrote to De Thibouville, in October, 1750, "upon 'Rome Sauvée;' I have taken a fancy to turn the tragedy of 'Sémiramis' into an Italian opera; I have corrected almost all my works; and all this without reckoning *the time lost* in learning the little German which a man must have to be able to make his wants known on a journey, a thing very necessary at my age. You will think it very ridiculous, as I do myself, that, at the age of fifty-six, the author of 'La Henriade' should take it into his head to speak German to the tavern servants."

A month later, to D'Argental: "Tell me if German has spoiled my French, and if I grow rusty like [J. B.] Rousseau. Do not go so far astray as to believe that I am learning seriously the Teutonic language; I prudently limit myself to knowing so much of it as is needful in speaking to my servants and my horses. I am not of an age to enter into all the delicacies of that language, so soft and harmonious; but we must know how to make ourselves understood by a postilion. I promise to say sweet things to the postilions who shall take me to my angels." In truth, he acquired something more than this of the language in which Klopstock had just written a portion of his "Messiah," and which Goethe was learning to prattle at his mother's knee in Frankfort. He wrote letters in German, though they do not appear in his works. We have printed letters of his in English, in Spanish, in Italian, in Latin; but his German letters, if they have been preserved, remain in manuscript.[1]

[1] 73 Œuvres de Voltaire, 241.

He entered soon upon the work of correcting the French writings of the king. He proved to be a zealous and vigilant tutor, who was proud of his pupil, and laid out an extensive scheme for his instruction, not content merely to correct errors. Here, again, he felt it necessary to explain to his Paris friends that he had nothing to do in Prussia for his twenty thousand francs of pension. He wished them to know that, if he was gentleman-in-ordinary to one king, chamberlain to another, and pensioned by both, he was, at the same time, a free and independent gentleman.

"I belong, then, at present [he wrote to Madame Denis, in October, 1750], to two masters. He who said that no man can serve two masters was assuredly quite right; so, not to contradict him, I serve none. I swear to you that I should take flight if I had to perform the duties of chamberlain, as in other courts. My function is to do nothing. I enjoy leisure. I give an hour a day to rounding off a little the works of the King of Prussia in prose and in verse; I am his grammarian, not his chamberlain. The rest of the day is my own. Happily, I brought here all my extracts relating to Louis XIV. I shall get from Leipsic the books I need, and I shall finish here the 'Age of Louis XIV.,' which, perhaps, I should never have finished at Paris. The stones of which I am raising this monument to the honor of my country would have served to crush me in France. One bold word would have seemed unbridled license; the most innocent things would have been interpreted with that charity which poisons everything. See what happened to Duclos after his 'History of Louis XI.' If he is my successor in historiography, as I hear, I advise him to write only when he has made a little journey beyond the borders of France, as I have.

"I am correcting, at present, the second edition which the King of Prussia is about to publish of the history of his country. An author in his position can say what he wishes without leaving his native land. He uses his right in all its extent. Imagine him, in order to seem more impartial, falling foul of his own grandfather with all his force. I have moderated the blows as much as I could. I like that grandfather a little, because he had a turn for magnificence, and left beautiful evidences of it. I had much trouble in getting the terms softened in which the grandson reproaches his ancestor for the vanity of having made himself a king,—a vanity from which his descendants derive advantages solid enough, and the title is not in the least disagreeable to them. At last I said to him, 'He is your grandfather, not mine; do with him whatever you please;' and I contented myself with lopping phrases. All this amuses and fills out the day. But, my dear child,

these days are passed far from you. I never write to you without regrets, without remorse, and without bitterness."

Upon referring to the work[1] under review, we find, indeed, that Frederic was not as docile on this subject as he invariably was upon points of rhetoric and prosody. The passage which Voltaire desired to soften remains severe. The dutiful king attributes his grandsire's ambition to something worse than vanity, — "to a certain perversity of self-love, which took pleasure in making others feel their inferiority."

Frederic's poem in honor of his army, "Aux Prussiens," for the correction of which he had particularly urged Voltaire's visit in 1750, came under the critic's view. It was written in a measure of Voltaire's own invention, of which he was fond to excess; but we see by his corrections, given in the last edition of the king's works, that he did not spare it. "Sire," he would say, on receiving a manuscript, "I am going to put on the gown and bands of the Abbé d'Olivet, and then I shall examine the exercise of my master." The remarks upon this poem, still preserved, in Voltaire's small hand, among the curiosities of Frederic's reign, are numerous and minute. The reader may be interested in a few specimens. The poem opens with this line, —

"Prussiens, que la valeur conduisit à la gloire."

[Comment.] "The hero here makes his *Prussiens* of two syllables, and afterwards, in another stanza, he accords them three syllables. A king is the master of his favors. Nevertheless, a little uniformity is necessary, and the *iens* usually make two syllables, as *liens*, *Silésiens*, *Autrichiens*, except the monosyllables, *rien*, *bien*, *chien*, and their compounds, *vaurien*, *chrétien*, etc. Why not begin by *peuples?* This word *peuple* being repeated in the second stanza, *État* could be there substituted."

"Le soleil plus puissant du haut de sa carrière
Dispense constamment sa bénigne lumière,
Il dissout les glaçons des rigoureux hivers."

[Comment.] "All this is extremely fine, and the comparison is admirable for its grandeur and its fitness. The word *bénigne* is a little devout, and is not admitted into noble poetry, — two good reasons for effacing it from your writings. That is very easy to correct. *Durable* would perhaps be better, or else no epithet."

[1] Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire de la Maison de Brandenbourg. 1 Œuvres de Frédéric, 102.

"Héros, vos grands exploits élèvent cet empire,
Soutenez votre ouvrage, ou votre gloire expire ;
Au comble parvenus il faut vous élever :
A ce superbe faîte
Tout mortel qui s'arrête
Est prêt à reculer."

[Comment.] "When one is at the top there is no such thing as getting higher, or else the simile is not just. When Boileau wrote,

'Au comble parvenus il veut que nous croissions,'

he meant it expressly to indicate an impossibility, and he said in continuation,

'Il veut en vieillissant que nous rajeunissions.'

One scarcely comes to a stand upon the *faîte;* in other words, this expression is equivocal, for it can signify that they have halted upon the summit, and then they cannot advance further. You could say something like this : —

'D'un vol toujours { égal / rapide } il faut vous élever,
Et monté près du faîte,
Tout mortel qui s'arrête,' etc.

For the rest, this ode is one of your most beautiful works. I love this measure passionately. I believe I am the father of it, but you have embellished it. It would be a great pity if you should renounce poetry in the force of your genius and age, and after the astonishing progress you have made. I hope your majesty will continue sometimes to employ your leisure in these noble amusements."

The king's longer and far more elaborate poem, upon the "Art of War," addressed to his successors on the throne of Prussia, was subjected to similar criticism. All of Voltaire's emendations appear to have been adopted by the royal poet. I append two or three of his notes upon this work also. The poem opens thus : —

"Vous qui tiendrez un jour, par le droit de naissance,
Le sceptre de nos rois, leur glaive et leur balance,
Pour défendre et juger ce florissant État,
Recevez le leçons d'un généreux soldat,
Qui nourri dans les camp par le dieu de la guerre ;
Va vous enseigner l'art de lancer son tonnerre."

[Comment.] "*Juger* appears superfluous : the lessons of a soldier, the art of launching the thunder-bolt, do not teach a prince how to judge. *Généreux soldat.* Any epithet is here redundant, and that of generous, so suitable if any one else should speak of your majesty, does not seem allowable when you speak of yourself. *Le dieu de la*

guerre and *lancer le tonnerre* seem too vague, too common; there is, moreover, no art of hurling the thunder-bolt, and the thunder-bolt does not go well with arms, horses, and cannons. You could easily change this opening, which ought to be very correct, and should preserve in its exact correctness a majestic simplicity. Perhaps you could say something like this: —

'Vous, le sang des héros, vous, l'espoir de l'État,
Jeune prince, écoutez les leçons d'un soldat
Qui, formé dans les camps, nourri dans les alarmes,
Vous appelle à la gloire et vous instruit aux armes,'

or,

'Vous ouvre la carrière et vous appelle aux armes.'

Perhaps there would be still more vivacity and force in saying, —

'Apprenez des l'enfance à défendre l'État,
Et, noblement docile à la voix d'un soldat,
Marchez avec moi, prenez les armes,' etc.

I believe that in finishing this exordium by *les armes*, and beginning the following period with *ces armes, ces chevaux*, the repetition would be happy, would connect the ideas, and give order to them."

"Sous les drapeaux de Mars Bellone vous enrôle,
Il faut que le fusil pose sur votre épaule,
Que votre corps dispos fasse les mouvements
Que l'exercice enseigne aux soldats commençants."

[Comment.] "As to the gun upon the shoulder, would it not be well to try to paint what is expressed here? The merit of poetry, and especially didactic poetry, does it not consist in saying common things in a peculiar manner? Could you not say that the shoulder, motionless and firm, carries the noble burden of the gun? It seems to me that it would be better to elevate in this manner by an epithet those first duties of the young soldier which you do not wish him to blush at."

"Bien loin qu'un soldat suive un aveugle courage,
Il faut qu'il soit dressé pour remplir son ouvrage;
Par ses faux mouvements, tardifs, prompts, inégaux,
On vit souvent manquer les projets des héros."

[Comment.] "We cannot say *remplir son ouvrage*. We say *remplir sa tâche, son devoir*. The word *dressé* is too trivial. I say again, the great secret, the only secret, is to ennoble those details. Something like this: —

'Ainsi, dans ces grand corps que la gloire conduit,
Que tout soit animé d'un courage docile;
La valeur qui s'égare est souvent inutile,
Des mouvements, trop prompts, trop lents, trop incertains,
Font tomber les lauriers qu'avaient cueillis vos mains.'"

The reader perceives from these samples that the king's *maître*, liberally compensated as he was, did something toward earning his salary. The emendation of the poem on the "Art of War," on this scale, must have cost no small labor. The tutor could say with truth, "I not only correct his works, but I compose for him in the margin a system of rhetoric, a prosody, which includes all my reflections upon the elegancies of our language, suggested by the little faults that I notice; only endeavoring to assist his genius, and to enable him at length to do without my pains. I made it a pleasure and a glory to cultivate his genius." The king, it seems, would sometimes purposely leave a word of doubtful propriety in his text to see what Voltaire would do with it. "We must leave him," wrote the king to Darget, "the pleasure of finding some fault."

Not that the *maître* denied his master the pleasure of receiving praise for his work. He criticised the king's poetry with strictness, but commended his prose too highly. His eulogy of Frederic's history of his own house would have been excessive if he had applied it to Thucydides. It was "a work unique," and one which, added to five victories and their consequences, stamped its author "the rarest of men," and "perhaps the greatest man that ever reigned." If he had but one favor to ask, it would be that Louis XV. of France should attentively read the chapters upon religion, and send to Prussia the ancient Bishop of Mirepoix. Frederic does indeed discourse with royal freedom upon this subject, speaking of the Roman Catholic church as "fruitful in plots and artifices;" a kingdom within a kingdom; hostile, of necessity, to the peace and harmony of nations. "The Pope has often been in opposition to sovereigns upon matters over which the church has no jurisdiction whatever."[1]

Work of this nature was going on between them during much of the year. Frederic, in his turn, wrote comments upon productions of Voltaire; and, usually, when a composition of either was ready for criticism, there would be a formal reading of it in the evening, in the presence of the king, Voltaire, La Mettrie, Darget, Chasot, and others of the familiar circle. Occasionally Frederic would leave them for a rapid tour in Silesia or some other distant place; and it is evident enough from Vol-

[1] 1 Œuvres de Frédéric, 208.

taire's notes that the absence of the master was not felt by them to be an unmixed evil. They contrived to be exceedingly merry together, while Frederic, booted and spurred, was carrying the apprehension and inspiration of the general's eye from post to post, marshaling his kingdom for the renewal of the long, long struggle between the Catholic and Protestant powers.

Voltaire, meanwhile, grew more and more enamored of his "Age of Louis XIV," a portion of which had already appeared. New motives urged him now to complete the work. He fondly thought that the history of a period to which most Frenchmen looked back with pride, and which Louis XV. and his family deemed the golden age of their house, would prepare the way for his honorable return to his native land, and enable him to pass there a tranquil old age, in spite of Boyer and his Philistines. The part executed in Prussia was a masterpiece of tact. He could not give all the repulsive truth of that foolish reign; but he told all of it which could then be of service, and nearly all of which he himself felt the iniquity. It was the work neither of a servile courtier nor of an angry exile, but of a citizen who loved his country, and desired to please and honor it. In the summer of 1751 we find him already proof-reading and arranging the details of publication. The work was printed in Berlin, in two volumes octavo, at his own expense, by the king's printer; but every noted book mart in Europe attempted to pirate a share of the profits. The proofs, as he afterwards learned, were regularly forwarded to Holland, where an edition of the work appeared before his own was ready.

The book had every kind of success, except the only one which the author personally coveted. The Boyers succeeded in getting it prohibited in France, and made the king believe that it contained matter unfit to be given to the public. Every one knew that Louis XIV. was secretly married to Madame de Maintenon, but Voltaire gave the names of the witnesses and the precise spot where the ceremony was performed. This was an indecorum. His statements, too, were called in question, and he did not mend the matter by assuring Europe, in a letter designed for publication, that "the late Cardinal de Fleury showed me the place where Louis XIV. married Madame de Maintenon." The work did not need official prohibi-

tion; "it would have been read without it." It had, in fact, the most astonishing currency in France, and not less in other countries where the educated class depended upon the French language for their reading.

The efforts of the author to get his own authorized and correct editions spread abroad in advance of the incorrect piracies were lamentably futile. We have an amusing instance in his attempt to introduce copies into England through the good offices of his old friend, Sir Everard Falkener. In writing to Falkener he still used the English language, and, considering that twenty-three years had passed since he left England, he wrote it very well. The reader will be interested in following this negotiation for a moment in Voltaire's letters to his English friend: —

[July 27, 1751.] "Dear Sir, — Fortune that hurries us to and fro in this transient world, attached you to a great prince, and carried me to the court of a great king. But, in these various tossings, my head will never prove giddy enough to forget your friendship. I hope you preserve some kindness for me, and I dare rely upon your good heart. I must tell you I have wrote a History of Louis the XIV. You may presume it is written with truth, and not without liberty or freedom. I have been obliged to print it in Berlin at my own expence. I presume four or five hundred copies could sell off well in your country; the two things I have at heart, truth and liberty, being still dear to your countrymen, raise in me that expectation. I dare apply, my dear sir, to your kindness and friendship of old. You may perhaps recommend this business to some honest man, and even to a bookseller, who would be honest enough to merit your favour. I would direct the cargo to him, and he should take a reasonable salary for his trouble. If I can by your favour find any such man, I shall be most obliged to you. I hope you are a happy husband and a happy father, as you are a worthy Englishman."

[November 27, 1751.] "The printers at Berlin are not so careful and so diligent in working for me, as you are beneficent and ready to favour your friends. They have not yet finished their edition; and I am afraid the winter season will not be convenient to direct to you, by the way of Hamburgh, the tedious lump of books I have threatened you with. However I shall make use of your kind benevolence towards your old friend, as soon as possible. I wish I could carry the *paquet* myself, and enjoy again the consolation to see you, to pay my respects to your family, and be the witness of your happiness."

[January 27, 1752.] "My *Louis XIV* is on the Elbe, about a month ago. I don't know whether the *grand* monarch has yet put to sea, to invade Great Britain. But booksellers are greater politicians than Lewis; and I think it is very likely they have got the start of me, by sending my book to London by the way of Rotterdam, while my bale of printed tales is on the Elbe; and so they will reap all the benefit of my labours, according to the noble way of the world. My book is prohibited amongst my dear countrymen, because I have spoken the truth: and the delays of cargoes, and the jarring of winds, hinder it from pursuing its journey to England. So, I have to fight with, or against the sea and earth and hell, for booksellers are the hell of writers. Be what it will, receive, my dear sir, my cargo of printed sheets, when wind and tide will permit. Do what you please with them; I am resigned. I had rather be read, than be sold: truth is above trade, and reputation above money!"

[March 27, 1752.] "My dear and beneficent friend, I send to you, by the way of Hamburgh, two enormous bales of the scribbling trade. I direct them to our envoy at Hamburgh, who will dispatch them to you, and put my wares to sea, instead of throwing them into the fire; which might be the case in France, or at Rome. My dear friend, I have recourse to your free and generous soul. Some french good patriots, who have read the book, raise a noble clamour against me, for having praised Marlborough and Eugène; and some good church-men damn me for having turned a little in to ridicule our *jansenisme* and *molinisme*. If our prejudiced people are fools, booksellers and printers or book-jobbers are rogues. I am like to be damned in France, and cheated by the Dutch; the old german honesty is gone. Booksellers of all regions are the same. I shall lose all the fruits of my labours and expences; but I rely on your kindness. You may cause some books to be bound, and choose an honest man, who will give them to the chief-readers of your nation. I entreat you to present His Royal Highness with one of these volumes, and to give some *exemplaires* or copies to those of your friends you will think fit. The bookseller you will choose may do what he pleases with the remainder, and sell them as best as he can, provided he sells them not before Easter; it is all I require of him."

He soon had the pleasure of hearing that Dodsley was publishing an edition of his work in London by subscription; he hastened to protest, urging the English publisher at least to defer his edition until he had been furnished with the author's latest corrections. New information came pouring in upon him, which he struggled to insert in new editions in advance

of the pirates. "Ministers of state," he wrote to Falkener in French, "who pitilessly refused to enlighten me when I formerly labored upon this work, made haste to send me information as soon as it appeared. The work, all formless as it was, has had so much vogue, and the subject of it is so interesting, that every one has wished to contribute toward perfecting it." In sending a copy of his new edition he resumes his correspondence with Falkener in English: —

[November 28, 1752.] "I hope, my dear and worthy friend, my worthy Englishman, you have received mylord Bolingbroke's vindication against priests, whom I have hated, hate, and I shall hate till doomsday. You will receive, my dear sir, in a very short time, an *exemplaire* of *Louis XIV's* new edition, more accurate and correct a great deal, more copious and curious. I desire you would be so kind as to answer two letters, I wrote to you long ago. Let me not be altogether in the dark about the good or bad success of my book in England. Two editions of it have been published this year in Europe, and two new ones are just now come out. But your approbation would flatter me more than all that eagerness of the book-mongers. Tully relyed more on the testimony of Cato, than on the huzzaz of the multitude. If you have any news of my book's fate, let me know some thing of it after a whole year. If you have given the volumes to a bookseller, be so good as to tell me whether this bookseller has any thing to remit to me, or not."

[January 16, 1753.] "I have reaped benefit enough, since I have pleased you, and not displeased your nation. I return you my most tender thanks. I hope to come over myself, in order to print my true works, and to be buried in the land of freedom. I require no subscription; I desire no benefit. If my works are neatly printed, and cheaply sold, I am satisfied."

[February 1, 1754.] "I have wrote to you already, and sent my letter to sir Hanbury Williams, the british envoy at the court of Dresden. But I could not tell you enough about the desire I have to see England again before my death. I did inform you of my desire to print my works in London, without benefit, without subscription, and merely in order to give a true edition of the works of a Frenchman, who thinks like a Briton. I send this letter to Dresden. I must tell you, my dear sir, that I have taken the liberty to draw upon you for the 94 pounds. I return you again 94 thousand thanks."

Ninety-four pounds! But the wonder is that he could rescue even so much from the spoilers. The property of authors and

artists is precisely that which, above all other property, needs and must have the protection of international law. The proceeds of his history, upon which he had labored at intervals for a quarter of a century, were pounced upon by the publishers of Europe, as beggars rush for the handfuls of silver tossed to them for a scramble on a gala day in Rome. And, in the absence both of law and "courtesy" publishers must do so. We can still see by the catalogues that, besides the editions published at Berlin under the author's eye, copies were manufactured in great numbers at the Hague, Leipsic, Frankfort, Dresden, London, and Edinburgh, without reckoning the editions made wholly or partly within the walls of Paris. It is highly probable that the copy which D'Alembert read with rapture three times, in his modest lodgings over the glazier's shop, was at least bound in Paris.

The brilliant and sustained success of this history was infinitely agreeable to the author who had been deprived of his office of historiographer to the King of France, and severely dealt with by the King of Prussia. "I shall say to you boldly, my dear angel," he wrote to D'Argental, "that I am not astonished at the success of the 'Age of Louis XIV.' Men are naturally curious. This book interests their curiosity at every page. There is no great merit in writing such a work, but there is some happiness in choosing such a subject. It was my duty as historiographer; and you know that I never fulfilled the duty of my place until I no longer held it. It was absurd, their taking that place from me; as if a gold key from the King of Prussia hindered my pen from being consecrated to the king, my master. I am still gentleman-in-ordinary; why take away my place of historiographer?"

Why, indeed? The reader who will take the trouble to open the work at any part of it will not have to read very far before being able to answer this question. In the second chapter, for example, there are a few pages upon the relations of the papal government to other governments which must have been gall and wormwood to ultramontanes; so rational were they, so moderate, so adroitly and quietly effective.

Another important and famous work executed in Prussia was a poem in four cantos, which was first named "La Religion Naturelle," but, finally, "La Loi Naturelle." The object

of this poem was to show that the sense of right and wrong in human beings is innate, universal, and sufficient; conscience being as essential a part of our nature as the senses. It was an attempt to put into verse the view of man's nature and duty that prevailed at the supper-table of the King of Prussia, when the conversation took a serious tone; as though the king had turned to Voltaire and said, "Come, now, Voltaire, joking apart, what ought men of the world, men of sense and courage, men like ourselves, for example, who cannot be scared by a dismal chimera, or deceived by any flattering dream, — what ought *we* to think and do, amid this chaos of contradictory beliefs, claims, and usages?" This ingenious poem, a masterpiece of easy, limpid versification, equally nonchalant and precise, is Voltaire's answer to such a question. Here are a few of its points: —

"God has spoken, doubtless; but it is to the universe. He has never inhabited the deserts of Egypt; Delphos, Delos, Ammon, are no asylums of his. He does not hide himself in the caves of the Sibyls. The moral law, the same in every age, in every place, speaks to eternal ages in the name of that God. It is the law of Trajan, of Socrates, and it is yours. Of this changeless worship nature is the apostle. Good sense receives it, and the pangs of remorse, born of conscience, are its defenders."

"Never did a parricide, a calumniator, say calmly, in the bottom of his heart, 'How beautiful, how sweet it is to destroy innocence, to rend the bosom that gave me birth!'"

"The laws which we make, fragile, inconstant, works of a moment, differ everywhere. Jacob, among the Hebrews, could marry two sisters; David, without offense to decency and morals, could flatter the importunate tenderness of a hundred beauties; the Pope, in the Vatican, cannot possess one. . . . . Usages, interests, modes of worship, laws, all differ. LET US BE JUST; it suffices; the rest is arbitrary."

"More than one good Catholic, on going out from the mass, rushing upon his neighbor for the honor of the faith, has cried to him, '*Die, impious wretch, or think like me!*' . . . . Why is this? It is because man, enamored of degrading slavery, has made God in his own image. We have made him unjust, irascible, vain, jealous, a seducer, inconstant, barbarous, like ourselves."

"The very virtues of the pagans, it is said, are crimes. Pitiless rigor! Odious doctrines! . . . . Are you not satisfied to condemn to the fire our best citizens, Montaigne and Montesquieu? Do you think

that Socrates and the just Aristides, Solon, the example and guide of the Greeks, Trajan, Marcus Aurelius, Titus, cherished and sacred names, whose works you have never read, are delivered over to the fury of the devils by the beneficent God whose image they were; and that you, acrid editor of a religious gazette, *you* will be crowned with light and surrounded in heaven with a choir of cherubim, for having, with a mendicant's wallet upon you, groveled for a while in ignorance and wallowed in the mire? Be saved yourself; I consent to that; but the immortal Newton, the learned Leibnitz, the wise Addison, and Locke, — friend, do not anticipate the judgments of heaven; respect such mortals as those; pardon their virtue. They have not damned you; why do you damn them?"

The poem concludes with a prayer to God, "so misconceived, though all things announce him:" "Hear my last words! If I have deceived myself, it is in seeking to know thy law. My heart may go astray, but it is full of thee. Without alarm I see eternity appear. I cannot think that a God who has brought me into being and shed so many blessings upon my life will torment me forever when my days are ended."

Before the work was finished, the author submitted it to the king, who, as it seems, assailed at once its least guarded position. If it be conceded that the sense of right and wrong is innate and universal, is it *sufficient?* That is the real question. Frederic's comments, which are not published, appear to have consisted of examples tending to show that it is not. "You frighten me," wrote the poet in reply; "I am much afraid, for the human race and for myself, that you are sadly in the right. It would be terrible, however, if there were no way of escape from your conclusions. Try, sire, not to be so right; for, really, when you are making of Potsdam a terrestrial paradise, this world is not absolutely a hell. Leave us a little illusion, I beg. Deign to aid me to deceive myself fairly. . . . . The true object of this work is tolerance and to hold up your example. . . . . I can well conceive that Alexander, appointed general of the Greeks, had no more scruples about killing Persians at Arbela than your majesty had in sending some impertinent Austrians to the other world. Alexander did his duty in killing Persians in war, but certainly he did not in assassinating his friend after supper."

The poet confessed the difficulty of defining virtue, but extricated himself by an ingenious compliment from the corner into which the king's comments had driven him: "You possess virtue; then virtue exists. Now, it was not religion that gave it to you; then you derive it from nature, as you do your rare understanding, which suffices for everything, and before which my soul prostrates itself."

When this poem was published, a year or two later, it found critics more severe than the King of Prussia; for it stirred the opposition of the whole orthodox world, both Catholic and Protestant. Pamphlets, parodies, treatises, volumes, appeared from the press against it; and of these as many as eight still linger in catalogues, and can occasionally be found. As usual, both parties in the controversy seem to have been very much in the right. Doubtless, the sense of right and wrong is part and parcel of us; but, also, there is need of a *something* by which this universal sense shall be gathered, clarified, strengthened, and brought to bear upon the consciences of men in whom the innate sense is weak or perverted.

A work destined to a far wider celebrity and influence than this poem was suggested at the King of Prussia's supper-table, and begun in Prussia. The ruling topic in literary circles during Voltaire's residence in Prussia was the Encyclopædia of Diderot and D'Alembert, the prospectus of which was published in 1750, the first volume in 1751, and the second in 1752. A glance at the Dictionary of Bayle, which this work superseded on the Continent, explains the enthusiasm with which it was welcomed. The editors not only had the advantage of following Bayle and Chambers, but, in 1750, they dared print what would have brought Bayle to a dungeon in 1696. Bayle could only hint and insinuate; but Diderot, though still obliged to use management and precaution, could handle delicate topics with far greater freedom, besides marshaling all the sciences against the enemies of truth. I need not here dwell upon this celebrated enterprise, to which we shall have to return erelong. From first to last, as we shall then see, Voltaire gave it his sympathy, his frequent coöperation, his fertile suggestions. In return, he derived from it the idea of his "Philosophical Dictionary," the most entertaining work of its magnitude in existence. It is Collini, an Italian secre-

tary and amanuensis of Voltaire, who tells us the little we know of its conception: —

"Every evening (at Potsdam) I was in the habit of reading to Voltaire, after he had gone to bed, some passages from Ariosto and Boccaccio. I performed my duty as reader with pleasure, because it gave me opportunities of hearing excellent observations, and of conversing with him on various subjects. September 28 [1752], he went to bed very much preoccupied. He told me that at the king's supper-table they had amused themselves with the idea of a Philosophical Dictionary; that this idea had been adopted as a serious project; that the king's men of letters and the king himself were going to work upon it in concert; and that some of the subjects to be treated were already assigned, such as Adam, Abraham, and others. I thought at first that this scheme was only an ingenious burlesque invented to enliven the supper-table; but Voltaire, eager and ardent in labor, began the very next day." [1]

He worked with such impetuosity that, in the course of a day or two, he sent to the king the draught of that extensive article upon Abraham which now figures in the second volume of the Dictionary. Never before and never since were erudition and badinage more happily blended than in this essay, which might amuse an archbishop if he read it without witnesses. Many worthy souls have been scandalized at seeing such a topic so lightly touched. But by whose fault was it that those venerable and majestic legends of the past were vulgarized into mere facts, oppressive and ridiculous? Not the "philosophers'." Other pieces followed. All the disputed subjects were treated with the same freedom and good-humor. The scheme harmonized well with his disturbed and broken life at this period; and every industrious writer of forty years' standing finds about him a great litter of odds and ends that can be worked up into small articles, if they happen to be wanted. The "Philosophical Dictionary" was Voltaire's commonplace book, which, being once begun, filled rapidly.

Add to these serious labors many trifles in verse, impromptus, compliments, epigrams, in which Voltaire excelled all poets. Every leading personage of the court, except the queen-regnant, called forth one or more of these. Those ad-

[1] Mon Séjour auprès de Voltaire, par C. A. Collini. Paris. 1807. Page 32.

dressed to the king have the great fault of excessive flattery. It is difficult for us, living where and when we do, to conceive how a man of Frederic's force and intelligence could have endured such adulation, even while laughing at it. Probably the ingenuity of the ideas and the grace of the versification atoned for the enormity of the compliment. In one of these little poems to the king, he tells him that the fire brought down by Prometheus to the earth is almost extinguished even in France, and adds, "With us there are merely sparks of it; with you a conflagration." The king had been denying, one evening, with much earnestness, the doctrine of immortality. Voltaire put into an eight-line stanza this idea: "Every preacher fails sometimes to live up to his sermon; you do, also, great king; on the high-road to immortality you preach to us that the soul is mortal."

Of the many notable things said by him at the king's table, scarcely any have been preserved, although several chroniclers extol their happiness and brilliancy. Wagnière relates an anecdote of Voltaire's journey among the German states, when he was accompanied by Major Chasot. As they were passing through a village, an album was presented to the poet for his autograph. On opening it he found that the last writer had inserted the familiar verse, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" He wrote underneath, —

"The big Prussian battalions. VOLTAIRE."

CHAPTER VI.

THE RIND OF AN ORANGE.

ADMIRING friends in France did not view the case of Voltaire *v.* Hirsch in the light in which Frederic II. of Prussia regarded it. When the particulars reached Paris, the plaintiff's nieces, the D'Argentals, Richelieu, Thieriot, and others of the intimate circle looked for the speedy return of the deserter. We have seen that the deserter himself had entertained the thought of slipping away on pretense of arranging his affairs in Paris. He came not. The summer was passing, and circumstances favored his return. Richelieu assured him that the government of France would not take his coming home amiss; which was proved by its allowing his tragedy of "Mahomet" to be again represented at the national theatre. Madame Denis joined her vehement and reiterated entreaties, ever returning to her original prediction that the King of Prussia would be the death of him. But he came not. August 6, 1751, guardian angel D'Argental took up the task of persuasion, and wrote him a letter so warm, so urgent, so reasonable, so honorable to both, that I am tempted to give it entire.

"I have nothing to add, my dear friend [he began], to what M. de Richelieu and Madame Denis are in the habit of writing to you. They have exhausted the subject; I could only repeat what they have said, and I should weaken it, since I could not present it with so much grace and eloquence. But I cannot refuse myself the satisfaction of speaking to you freely for the first time.

"You know how much your departure afflicted me. Your resolution to leave this country reduced me to despair; I was touched and piqued to the last degree. But the pique has not lasted; the grief alone remains. I did not doubt that you would repent; you have repented. You have felt in all its extent the grief of having forsaken the most lovable of countries, the most pleasing society, and the most affectionate friends. The king for whom you have abandoned everything could not recompense you for so many sacrifices. No one

renders more justice than I do to his great and excellent qualities; but we do not despoil the lion of his skin; it is necessary to pay tribute to the human being, and still more to his royalty. Love levels all distinctions; friendship wishes a little equality of conditions. It is only good to live with those to whom we can say what we think, and whom we dare contradict sometimes.

"I do not speak to you of what you have experienced in the affair of D'Arnaud, the lawsuit, etc. I should reproach myself for recalling to you doleful recollections, affairs which you have felt but too keenly, and which are still present to your mind. The king, despite his wrongs toward you, is still the only consolation which you can find in the country where you now are. You are surrounded by enemies, by the envious, by schemers. They compete for and snatch a favor, a confidence, which no one truly possesses. The king is a coquette, who, in order to keep several lovers, renders none of them happy. That stormy court is nevertheless the only place where you could live; outside of that, there is not a single being who deserves to be spoken to by you. You depend upon the caprices of a single man, and that man is a king. In a word, you have fled from enemies whom at least you did not see, to find others with whom you live continually. You sought liberty, and you subjected yourself to the greatest constraint. You thought to put yourself beyond the reach of envy, and you have only placed yourself nearer the envious, and exposed yourself to their attacks.

"I must own, nevertheless, that your absence, though productive of so many evils, has had one good result: people here feel the loss they have sustained. You are sincerely regretted here. Your return is vividly desired; but you must seize this moment, and not risk losing favorable dispositions by delaying to profit by them. You are too superior a person to be willing, from false pride, to persist in a mistake. You know so well how to correct your works; it is much more essential to correct your conduct. You have committed a great fault; you cannot repair it too soon.

"What has been obtained for you with regard to 'Mahomet' ought to prove to you that there is here no more heat and animosity against you, and that you have in M. de Richelieu a friend who serves you in a manner the most zealous, the most essential, of whom hitherto you have not made use enough. The success of 'Mahomet,' which is not doubtful, will augment still more the desire to see you again, and will prepare the way for your reception. 'Rome Sauvée' will surely prove your best work. It is impossible to produce it without you. The piece requires a perfection of representation which you will not even perceive until you are actually present upon the scene; and the

actors cannot play it well without your instruction. You will render the good actors excellent and the mediocre endurable. It is certain that upon reflection we shall never undertake, in your absence, to produce a work the success of which, without your assistance, is uncertain. Its success is assured if you are present, and when you shall have rendered the piece worthy of yourself and the actors worthy of the piece.

"Your glory, your happiness, are involved in your return. Absorbed entirely in your interest, I do not speak of mine; if you deign to regard my feelings, you will know that it rests with you either to overwhelm me with grief or fill me with joy. Madame d'Argental shares my sentiments.

"The coadjutor (the Abbé Chauvelin), Choiseul, and others expect you with the most lively and the most affectionate impatience. You will be received with open arms; and if you are moved by friendship (as I cannot doubt) you will experience the most exquisite pleasure which it can procure."

To these urgent letters he returned answer, in substance: "Yes, I am coming; but for the next six months I am so involved in unfinished work that I must remain here." It was his last chance of a happy return to his native city, though he was far from suspecting it.

He was spending the summer of 1751 very agreeably and prosperously after the winter storms. His health had improved as the season advanced, owing, as he thought, to his abandoning remedies and trusting to good living. He told his niece, Madame de Fontaine, whose "stomach was made upon the model of his own," that, after having tried cold waters and warm waters, all the regimens and all the doctors, he had taken to the system of dining, supping, and even breakfasting, and found himself a new man. "I have lived six consecutive months with my king, eating like a devil, and taking, like him, a little powdered rhubarb every other day. Imagine an admirable château, the master of which leaves me entire liberty, beautiful gardens, good cheer, a little employment, society, and delicious suppers with a philosopher-king, who forgets his five victories and his grandeur." He was very fully employed in reading the proofs of his "Louis XIV.," correcting the king's poems, retouching his own, and preparing his last tragedies for the Paris stage. All the old cordiality seemed restored between the king and himself. Such notes as this passed be-

tween them, as Voltaire labored in one room of the château and the king in another: —

"Oh, *mon Dieu*, sire, how do you do it, then? In eight days I have patched a hundred and fifty verses of 'Rome Sauvée,' and your majesty has composed four or five hundred. I am exhausted, and you are fresh; I struggle like a man possessed, and you are as tranquil as one of the elect. I invoke the genius, and he comes to you. You labor as you govern, as the gods are said to move the world, without effort. I have a little secretary, as big as a thumb, who is sick from copying two acts at a sitting. Will your majesty permit the diligent, indefatigable Vigne to copy the rest for you? I ask as a favor that your majesty will read my 'Rome Sauvée.' Your glory is interested in not allowing to issue from Potsdam any works but such as are worthy of the Mars-Apollo who consecrates this retreat to posterity. Sire, you and I, with all due respect (pardon the *you and I*), must produce nothing which is not good, or we must die in the attempt. I shall not send 'Rome' to my virtuoso of a niece until Mars-Apollo is content with it. I place myself at his feet."

Several notes of similar tenor passed, though they were separated only by a ceiling and a floor. They toiled this summer like two editors struggling to produce "good numbers," each attended by secretaries, who also, as Voltaire intimates, were kept busy enough. Harmony prevailed at Potsdam. Voltaire lived upon cordial terms with the king's Potsdam familiars, La Mettrie, Darget, D'Argens, and others; Maupertuis remaining usually at Berlin in his own house, or making a summer visit to his native St. Malo on the Channel shore. La Mettrie, in particular, often visited Voltaire at this time, and it was through his indiscretion that a cloud came over this peaceful scene, never to be dispelled. The plump and careless La Mettrie, "wise in his profession," said Voltaire, "but a little foolish in everything else," was far from being the happy man he seemed. Like Voltaire, he was mortally homesick, as Frenchmen generally are when they are away from home; and he was exiled for opinion's sake. "He burns to return to France," wrote Voltaire. "This man, so gay, who is supposed to laugh at everything, sometimes cries like a child, because he is here." He implored Voltaire to use his influence with the Duke de Richelieu in his favor, that the decree condemning him and his book might be revoked.

Thus a confidential familiarity was established between the two men, and, one day, in the last week of August, 1751, La Mettrie gave Voltaire a piece of information that stunned him.

"I am going to astonish you [wrote Voltaire to Madame Denis, September 2d]. This La Mettrie is a man of no influence, who talks familiarly with the king after the reading. He speaks to me in confidence; he has sworn to me that, in talking to the king, some days ago, of my supposed favor, and of the little jealousy which it excites, the king replied to him, —

"'*I shall have need of him for another year at the most; we squeeze an orange and throw away the rind.*'

"I forced myself to repeat these sweet words; I redoubled my questions; he has redoubled his oaths. Will you believe him? Ought I to believe him? Is that possible? What! After sixteen years of bounties, of offers, of promises; after the letter which he wished you should keep as an inviolable pledge of his word? And again, at what a time does he say this? At a time when I am sacrificing all to serve him; when I am not only correcting his works, but writing in the margin a system of rhetoric, a prosody, composed of all the reflections which I make upon the proprieties of our language, occasioned by the trifling faults which I remark, — seeking only to aid his genius, to enlighten it, and to put it into a condition to do without my pains.

"Assuredly, I considered it a pleasure and a glory to cultivate his genius; all contributed to my illusion. A king who has gained battles and provinces; a king of the north who composes verses in our language; a king, too, whom I did not seek, and who told me that he loved me! Why should he have made me such advances? I am lost in wonder! I understand nothing of it. I have done all that I could not to believe La Mettrie.

"But still, I don't know. In reading over his verses, I came upon an epistle to a painter, named Pesne, who belongs to him; these are the first lines: —

> 'Quel spectacle étonnant vient de frapper mes yeux!
> Cher Pesne, ton pinceau te place au rang des dieux.'[1]

"This Pesne is a man whom he does not regard. Nevertheless, he is *the dear Pesne;* he is *a god.* Perhaps, in all that he has written, his intellect alone impels him, and the heart is far away. Perhaps all

[1] What an astonishing spectacle has just struck my eyes! Dear Pesne, your brush places you in the rank of the gods.

those letters in which he lavishes upon me such vivid and affecting compliments mean nothing at all.

"These are terrible weapons which I am giving you against me. I shall be justly condemned for having yielded to so many caresses. You will take me for M. Jourdain, who said, 'Can I refuse anything to a lord of the court, who calls me his dear friend?' But I shall reply to you, He is an amiable king.

"You easily imagine what reflections, what returns to the subject, what embarrassment, and, so to speak, what chagrin the avowal of La Mettrie has caused. You will say to me, Leave at once! But, for my part, I cannot say, Let us start. When one has begun something, it is necessary to finish it; and I have two editions upon my hands, and engagements for months to come. I am under pressure on all sides. What am I to do? To ignore that La Mettrie has spoken to me, to confide it only to you, to forget all, and to wait! You will be my sure consolation. I shall not say of *you*, 'She has deceived me in swearing that she loved me.' Though you were a queen, you would be sincere. Tell me, I pray you, and at length, all that you think of this by the first courier dispatched to Lord Tyrconnel."

The reader does not need to be informed what Madame Denis thought of La Mettrie's story. She thought what she had always thought, that the King of Prussia would be the death of her uncle, unless he could make a timely escape. She sent him word, also, that "Mahomet" had been reproduced in Paris with all the success which an author could desire. He returned again and again to his orange peel.

[October 29, 1751.] "I brood continually over the rind of the orange. I try to believe nothing of it; but I am afraid of being like cuckolds, who force themselves to think that their wives are very faithful. At the bottom of their hearts the poor men feel something that notifies them of their disaster.

"What I am sure of is that my gracious master has honored me with some marks of his teeth in the Memoirs which he has written of his reign since 1740. There are in his poems some epigrams against the emperor and against the King of Poland. Very well; that a king should make epigrams against kings may be an affair of ministers, but he ought not to hail upon the parsley.

"Consider, too, that his majesty, in his merry tales, has assailed his secretary, Darget, with a number of cutting reflections, with which the secretary is very much scandalized. He makes him play a ridicu-

[1] Moliére. Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, act iii. scene 3.

lous part in his poem of the 'Palladium,' and the poem is printed, though in truth there are few copies of it.

"What do you wish me to say to you? If it is true that the great love the little whom they laugh at, I must console myself; but, also, if they laugh and do not love, what am I to do? Laugh at *them* in my turn, all sweetly, and leave them in the same way. I must have a little time to withdraw the funds which I have brought into this country. That time will be consecrated to patience and to labor; the rest of my life shall be yours.

"I am very glad of the return of brother *Isaac* (D'Argens). He was at first a little out of tune, but he has regained the tone of the orchestra. I have made it up with Algarotti. We live together like brothers; they come into my chamber, which I seldom leave; from there we go to sup with the king, and sometimes gayly enough. The man who fell from the top of a steeple, and who, finding himself softly cushioned in the air, said, 'Good, provided it lasts,' resembled me not a little. Good-night, my dearest plenipotentiary; I have a great desire to fall at Paris into my house."

He was "sure" that the king had spoken ill of him in his work upon the history of his own reign. If the king did so, he must have erased the passage. In the work as published, Frederic assigns to the poet Voltaire a rank above Homer, and to Voltaire the "philosopher" an equality with Locke, Bayle, Fontenelle, Hobbes, Shaftsbury, Collins, and Bolingbroke. "These great men," remarks the king, "and their disciples gave a mortal stroke to religion. Men began to examine what they had stupidly adored. Reason overthrew superstition; disgust was felt for the fables which had been believed; the blasphemies to which men had been piously attached were held in horror; and deism, the simple worship of the Supreme Being, made a number of converts. With that reasonable religion tolerance was established, and people were no longer enemies because they differed in opinion." This was pure Voltaire. On the following page, the king asserts that an unprejudiced person will prefer "La Henriade" to the poems of Homer, which only "delineate the manners of Canadians." [1]

To return to our orange peel. The merry and melancholy La Mettrie died suddenly in December, 1751, after dining profusely at Lord Tyrconnel's too luxurious table. Voltaire could cross-examine him no more. "I could have wished," he wrote

[1] Histoire de mon Temps, chapter 1. 2 Œuvres de Frédéric, 37.

to his niece, "to ask La Mettrie in his dying moments some news of the orange rind. That good soul, upon the point of appearing before God, would not have been able to lie. There is great appearance that he told the truth. He was the most foolish of men, but he was the most frank. The king inquired very particularly as to the manner of his death; if he had observed all the Catholic forms; if he had derived edification from them. He was told at last that the gourmand died like a philosopher. '*I am very glad of it, for the repose of his soul*,' said the king to us. We laughed, and he also.

"The king said to me yesterday, in the presence of D'Argens, that he would have given a province to have me. That does not look like the rind of the orange. Apparently, he has not promised any province to the Chevalier de Chasot (absent on leave). I am very sure that he will not come back. He is much dissatisfied, and he has more agreeable affairs elsewhere. He will find me competent to arrange mine."

This thorn was never extracted, and it rankled always. Perhaps some kind friend reported to the king a light word of Voltaire's on receiving a batch of the royal poetry to correct, when he is said to have asked, "Will this king want me long for his washerwoman?"[1]

[1] Duvernet, chapter xv.

CHAPTER VII.

EMBROILED WITH MAUPERTUIS.

Few men had more reasons to be content with their position than Maupertuis, president of the Academy of Berlin. The King of Prussia attached very high importance to this institution, founded by Leibnitz in 1701, but which he had resuscitated and developed. He had recently added to it a chemical laboratory, where he sometimes witnessed the rudimentary experiments then in vogue. A botanic garden was among its new features, to which the Bartrams, botanists of Philadelphia, sent contributions. The public sessions of the Academy had great interest and *éclat*. The electrical machine, the air-pump, the thermometer, had then the attraction of novelty, and of fashionable novelty. The king, the queens, the royal princes, the princesses, the resident nobility, ambassadors, and all the throng who go wherever these go enhanced the splendor of special occasions. Except his army and its appurtenances, there was nothing the king valued more. Frugal as he was, we see in his letters to Maupertuis that he gave prompt assent to the president's frequent suggestions, and often empowered him to expend more than the sum mentioned. He evidently desired to attract to his Academy the first men in each science, provided only that they were men of independent minds. In all his efforts to improve and strengthen the Academy, Maupertuis was his confidential agent; who also retained a liberal pension from the King of France, for services rendered to science in his earlier life.

Frederic had assigned the president a spacious and handsome house just out of Berlin, near the royal park, with garden and grounds adjacent. Here Maupertuis had so abundantly gratified his taste for strange animals and peculiar races of men that passers-by might have taken his establishment for a menagerie. There were troupes of dogs, cats, parrots, par-

oquets, monkeys, curious poultry, and other creatures, some of which were savage, and alarmed the visitor. The president, with his mania for odd experiments, took pleasure in mixing the breeds, and loved to descant upon the creatures thus produced. Strange things occurred sometimes in this Noah's ark. At a grand dinner given by Maupertuis, in 1747, to a French ambassador returning from Petersburg to France, an exquisite little parrot walked freely about the table, and at length alighted, with a cherry in its bill, upon the head of Madame the Ambassadress. Upon that splendid elevation the bird ate the cherry with a grace that enchanted the whole table; and there was no harm done, says the narrator of the scene, except that which could be repaired by washing the lady's *coiffure*. Among his other wonders he had an eccentric negro servant, who went with him everywhere, and formed a striking feature of the dinner scene as he stood behind his master's chair.

Maupertuis wielded real power: in other words, he had control over the repute and the subsistence of men. The king had expressly given him the precedence, as president of the Academy, over all the members, "just as a general, who is only a gentleman, commands dukes and princes in an army." It was in his power, also, to give, to take away, to increase, and to diminish the pensions assigned to literary and learned men. All this, added to his natural love of ascendency, made him one of the most conspicuous and important personages in the society of the capital of Prussia.

But, as the king himself remarked, he was an uneasy spirit, prone to jealousy; and while he was in the polar regions, flattening the earth and flirting with Lapland maidens, he had acquired the habit of drinking brandy, which did not improve a disposition naturally irritable and exacting.[1] The coming of Voltaire had sensibly lessened his importance at court. He knew only too well that the pension given by the king to the poet was two thousand crowns a year greater than his own, and he was consoled by the reflection that there were two dancers at the royal opera who received more than either of them. At the king's suppers he was now totally eclipsed.

[1] Vie de Maupertuis, par La Beaumelle, page 122. 73 Œuvres de Voltaire, 546. 74 Œuvres de Voltaire, 87.

Who was not? As there are tragedians who desire to play "Falstaff," so there are mathematicians who would excel in the festive epigram and the gay repartee. The king, moreover, as was only too manifest, promoted science, in great part, from a sense of duty; but literature he loved with his whole heart. The topics of the supper-table, when Voltaire was present, were likely to be such as gave him opportunities to shine, and in discussing which no living man could equal him. The king's face beamed as he heard from Voltaire's lips happier things than any which had enraptured him in his works; and the guests at a king's table are not backward in applauding what the king applauds. The reader of Voltaire's letters must have remarked that the wit and humor, the curious, frequent felicities of style, which make him among the most readable of writers, were natural to him. The style was the man. His letters to his nieces and most familiar comrades have in them even more of the Voltairean sparkle than others; and all his friends agree that his conversation was more amusingly Voltairean than his writings. We can therefore conceive that a philosopher, strong in the gravities of talk, and accustomed to the first place in conversation, might be unable to enjoy the new-comer.

At first friendly enough, Maupertuis soon showed his "unsociable" side. Voltaire, as it seems, gave him mortal offense without knowing it. There being a vacancy in the Berlin Academy, the poet favored the election of the Abbé Raynal, afterwards so celebrated, and mentioned his preference to the president without reserve. Behold the innocent beginning of a feud that was to resound through coming centuries: —

"My dear President, — I interest myself much more in the Languedocian Raynal than in the Provençal Jean [D'Argens]. I indulged the flattering hope of seeing you here [at Potsdam], but I see plainly that one must go in quest of you. I await the moment when the hero-philosopher who makes me love Potsdam will make me love Berlin. A thousand respects to Madame de Maupertuis. I salute you in Frederic, you and our brothers. From my cell in the most agreeable convent of the earth, 24 October (1750)."

The king gave the vacant place to the Languedocian Raynal; and this, if we may believe Voltaire's repeated declara-

tion, was the beginning and first cause of Maupertuis's enmity to himself. "I have made a violent enemy of that temperate philosopher, Maupertuis, for a useless place of Associate to the Academy of Berlin, given by the king, in spite of his opposition, to the Abbé Raynal."[1] Ill-feeling was developed rapidly between them; each, of course, believing the other to be the aggressor. Anecdotes are not wanting here; but they come to us without dates, as without authority. Something like the following may have occurred: Maupertuis coming in late to a supper in Voltaire's rooms, the poet congratulated him upon one of his moral essays just published. "Your book, *mon président*," said he, "has given me pleasure, though there are some obscurities in it of which we will talk together." Maupertuis, as Duvernet reports, replied, in a hard, offensive manner, "Obscurities! There may be some for *you!*" To which Voltaire is said to have responded, "I esteem you, *mon président;* you are brave; you wish war!"

A more probable tale is that, at the time of the affair with the jeweler, the president refused to aid his countryman. Voltaire asked him to speak on his behalf to one of the commissioners who was appointed to investigate the case, — a favor then considered within the proprieties both to ask and to grant. Maupertuis replied that it was an ugly business, with which he could not be mingled. Such a refusal at such a time is an offense which cannot be effaced from the memory. The cloud that hung heavy and menacing over Voltaire in February, 1751, when he was excluded from the king's presence and threatened with exile and ruin, was quickly dissipated, and he seemed in higher favor than ever. Soon, the splendid, unprecedented success of his "Louis XIV." gave new lustre to his literary eminence, restored all his audacity, and made him stronger than ever in himself. "Ten editions in a year" have their effect on an author's mind, and we may be sure that some friend was good enough to report to him Maupertuis's verdict upon the history, when he compared it to the "gambols of a child."

Toward the end of 1751, some copies of an absurd book, in the La Mettrie style, published in Copenhagen, began to circulate in Berlin, entitled "My Thoughts," — a collection of

[1] Voltaire to D'Argental, August 5, 1752.

unconnected paragraphs, in which subjects of the greatest difficulty and delicacy were treated without knowledge, tact, or reserve. The mind of the author seemed to run very much upon a yet unknown art of *breeding* superior human beings, and he threw out many wild suggestions toward it. This is one of his Thoughts: "Let a prince gather into one city the wisest, the most enlightened, the most virtuous, the best formed persons of either sex whom he can find in his dominions; that city will be a nursery of great men. Princes have studs [*haras*] for horses; they ought to have such for subjects. When they prevent the mixing of breeds, they will be sure of having excellent progeny, both in horses and in men." Imagine a book of which this specimen is among the least unquotable passages! There was one Thought in the work which had a more particular interest for Berlin society.

"If," said the unknown author, "we search both ancient and modern history, we shall find no example of a prince who has given seven thousand crowns a year to a man of letters as man of letters. There have been greater poets than Voltaire; there was never one so well recompensed. . . . . The King of Prussia heaps favors upon men of talent for precisely the same reasons that induce a prince of Germany to bestow them upon a buffoon or a dwarf."

Here was matter for the gossips of Berlin! Who was the author of such Thoughts as these? His dedication was signed "Gonia de Palaios," a Greek disguise of part of his name. He was a young French adventurer, named La Beaumelle, settled in Denmark as professor of the French language and literature, one of many Frenchmen who throve upon the fashion for French literature then prevailing in Europe. The paragraph of his work just quoted was soon a topic of conversation in Berlin, even at the king's supper-table, where it was the occasion of many jests and uproarious laughter. Nevertheless, the king did not relish the passage, and Voltaire still less. La Beaumelle had consulted Voltaire upon one of his literary projects, and had received from him a friendly reply. If the king looked further into the "Thoughts," he may have fallen upon this: "Merit reaches the court by baseness, and rises there by impudence; grovel, then, impudently."

The young man acted upon this idea. He resigned his post

at Copenhagen, and in November, 1751, he was at Potsdam, well provided with good letters, and face to face with Voltaire, in the king's palace! He had written announcing his coming, and saying that he visited Prussia for no other purpose than to see three great men who lived in that kingdom. One of these was the author of "Alzire;" and, although he was the second of the three, he wished to see him first. Voltaire, puzzled and curious, received him civilly, kept him to dinner, and expended four hours of his time upon him. La Beaumelle, not aware that Voltaire had seen "My Thoughts," complained of the coolness of a man to whom he paid the homage of a visit.

"He questioned me much," reports La Beaumelle, "and even to indecency. All his questions aimed at ascertaining whether I had designs upon the place of La Mettrie, whose death was just announced. As I had an object a little more elevated than that, and as I was in his abode to pay my homage to him, not to make him my confidant, all my answers tended to convey that I was very far from aspiring to replace La Mettrie. He asked me who the other two great men were whom I had come to see. I told him that one was the king. 'Oh,' he said, 'it is not so easy to see the Reverend Father the Abbé. And the other?' 'M. de Maupertuis.' He smiled bitterly; it seemed to me that he would have preferred me to say M. Pelloutier, author of an excellent 'History of the Celts.' . . . . I tried to gain his good-will; but I perceived that I made no progress toward it. Knowing that he was very sensitive to praise, I was every moment on the point of incensing him. Shame prevented me. I have not the courage to praise to their faces persons whom I esteem or despise."

No allusion to "Mes Pensées" escaped the lips of either of them on this occasion, and La Beaumelle returned to Berlin with only the uncomfortable feeling of a man who has paid a visit at an unfriendly time. He attributed Voltaire's coolness to indigestion, and he went away lamenting that "such a soul should depend upon such a body." He remained at Berlin, where he made himself somewhat conspicuous as one who obviously desired to push himself into the circle of Frenchmen about the king. He was much with Lord Tyrconnell, the

French ambassador; he courted Darget, the king's reader and scribe; and the unconscious effrontery of the young man gave him a kind of importance. Voltaire, at length, tried his hand at the business of getting quietly rid of him. When La Beaumelle had been a month in the kingdom, Voltaire wrote him a polite note, to the effect that he would be very much obliged if he would be so good as to lend him a copy of "Mes Pensées," which he had heard highly spoken of. The young man knew not what to do; he hesitated long; he consulted Lady Bentinct, who advised him to comply. He sent the book to Voltaire, who, three days after, returned it to the author, with the leaf turned down at page 70, where occurred the passage upon the king's buffoons and dwarfs. The author of the work, far from taking the gentle hint, only waited until Voltaire came to Berlin to intrude upon his privacy once more. La Beaumelle's account of this interview shows Voltaire behaving with self-control and even magnanimity: —

"The 7th of December [1715] the king arrived at Berlin from Potsdam, and M. de Voltaire with him. I went to see him; he spoke to me of my book; in a hard, dry tone he criticised it very justly and very severely, which was disagreeable at the time, but has been profitable to me since. He added that the friendly zeal with which he had entered into my project of publishing a series of classics at Copenhagen did not deserve the ill-treatment he had received in that work. I was astonished and surprised at this reproach. I asked him to point out the passage. He mentioned it. I repeated the passage several times, word for word, maintaining always that it tended to his glory. 'Then,' replied he, 'I do not know how to read.' 'That may be,' said I; 'nevertheless, it remains certain that I have not given, nor wished to give, you cause of offense.' I turned that passage in a hundred different ways; I could not make him accept it in the only sense it could fairly bear. Ashamed, doubtless, at such foolish quibbling, he fastened upon that other phrase, *There was never any poet so well recompensed as Voltaire.* He said to me that what the king gave him was not a recompense, but a simple indemnification, and he added in these very words, 'You have, no doubt, taken me for a man who has no money.' I told him that I knew he was very rich; but it was not that which made him estimable. He replied to me that he was an officer and chamberlain of the king. I repeated to him what he had said to Congreve: that, if he had been nothing but a chamberlain, I should not have given myself the trouble to come and

see him. These words seemed to soften him. He assured me that he bore me no ill-will on account of the passage, but that it would not be so easy to make my peace with the Marquis d'Argens, who was neither a buffoon nor a dwarf; nor with the Baron de Pollnitz, who was a man of rank; nor with Count Algarotti, who merited much consideration; nor with M. de Maupertuis, president of an academy, the entrance to which he was firmly resolved to defend against one who had written of men who were the king's friends, rather than his *beaux esprits*, that they were buffoons and dwarfs."

"Had the king read the passage?" asked the young man. Voltaire informed him that the king had read it, and did not like it. "Who had showed it to the king?" It was Darget, the king's secretary, said Voltaire. La Beaumelle hastened to Darget, who advised him in a friendly manner not to prolong his stay in Berlin. Next, he called upon Maupertuis, the official chief of the king's buffoons and dwarfs. In him, at length, he found a sympathizing friend, who declared that the offensive passage had had nothing offensive in it until M. de Voltaire had given it a bad interpretation at the king's table; "as if," says La Beaumelle, "I had wished to assert that the learned men of the court were buffoons and dwarfs, and the king a petty prince of Germany." Maupertuis assured the author of "My Thoughts" that he had evidently meant to say something highly flattering both to the king and his companions. "It was clear," the president said, "that I had wished to say that, as far as the King of Prussia was above a petty prince of Germany, so far were the *savans* of his court above the buffoons and dwarfs with which the petty princes amused themselves." The president advised him to send the king a copy of his book; which he did. Receiving no acknowledgment, he attributed the omission to the machinations of Voltaire, whom he still courted. He wrote an ode on the "Death of the Queen of Denmark," he addressed Memoirs to the king, he circulated freely in the society of Berlin; he was resolved to effect an admission to the king's circle.

In the midst of these endeavors, a humiliating disaster befell him. At the opera one evening, he found next to him a pretty and agreeable woman, the wife of a captain in the Prussian army, who accompanied her. She made an easy conquest of the good-looking young Frenchman, and gave him a rendez-

vous at her own quarters. The husband surprised them there. He thundered forth the wrath of an indignant husband and captain; but it soon appeared that it was the money of the young man, not his blood, which was necessary to appease him. He seized by main force the purse of the victim. It was so meagrely provided that the gallant captain complained to the commandant of Berlin, demanding further reparation for the wrong done him. La Beaumelle was instantly arrested and confined at Spandau, without having been confronted with his accuser, and without having been heard in his defense! The king, the court, the army, the city, laughed at the sudden collapse of the adventurer. The truth, however, soon reached the king, and, after ten days' detention La Beaumelle was reëstablished at Berlin, and the captain and his wife, partners in the iniquity, were prisoners in the fortress of Spandau. To this happy result all the colony of Frenchmen had contributed, Voltaire among the most zealous. So reports Lady Bentinct, who adds that La Beaumelle, on his return from Spandau, flew into Voltaire's arms, thanking him for his services, in a transport of gratitude. His transport, however, was of short duration. He made no progress toward the king, and, being assured that Voltaire was the obstacle in his path, his animosity revived in more than its former intensity.

Voltaire had a particular reason for conciliating this man. In some way, not then known, La Beaumelle had obtained possession of a large number of the letters of Madame de Maintenon, the wife of Louis XIV. and the confidant of his policy during the last twenty-six years of his reign. Imagine what those letters must have been to the author of a "History of the Age of Louis XIV.," just issuing from the press! If he could get a sight of them before copies of his history were distributed, they might prove of great value as a means of correcting possible errors. If he were denied access to them, he might well be alarmed lest their publication should impair the value of many a chapter wrought out with infinite pains from heterogeneous material. He asked La Beaumelle for a sight of them. His request was refused. Voltaire endeavored in various ways to bring him to reason, but, at length, lost patience with him, and their acquaintance ended in a stormy scene at Voltaire's abode, from which La Beaumelle retired vowing eternal ven-

geance. "The rash man will repent of his conduct," said Voltaire. "Repent!" cried La Beaumelle. "It is you, wretch that you are, who will repent! I know all your enormities. I would not pollute my mouth by repeating them; but I shall know how to punish them. I will pursue you even to hell! I mean that you shall say, 'Alas! Desfontaines and Rousseau are alive again.' My hate will live longer than your verses!"

Soon after this scene, which La Beaumelle himself reports, he left Prussia, baffled and humiliated. He failed to gain a foot-hold there simply because the king did not desire him. He went to Gotha; whence he fled in hot haste with a woman of ill-repute, leaving several creditors to mourn his departure. His revenge consisted in this: he published an edition of Voltaire's "Louis XIV.," "augmented by very numerous Remarks by M. de la B." These remarks, as the reader may imagine, were audacious, abusive, and false. The publication of an unauthorized edition of a work while it was still new, for the purpose of injuring the author, was an outrage unique even in that age, and has never since been surpassed. The edition had great success as a speculation, and gave the unscrupulous editor all the notoriety his morbid vanity could desire. In the course of his remarks, however, he discoursed upon members of the royal family of France with a freedom which they resented, and, in consequence, "M. de la B." found himself in the Bastille. Voltaire, too, rose upon him, in due time, and made his name odious forever. "I heard La Beaumelle confess, two years ago," wrote La Harpe, in 1774, "that his conduct was inexcusable, and that it was himself who was first in the wrong toward M. de Voltaire."[1] We shall perhaps have occasion to observe that M. de Voltaire kept him in mind of the fact.

Meanwhile, the author of the "Age of Louis XIV." remained under the impression, which time did not efface, that he owed all this coil of trouble and anxiety to Maupertuis. "If," said he to the King of Prussia and to others, "Maupertuis did not deceive La Beaumelle while he was in Berlin, in order to excite him against me; if Maupertius can wash his hands of the criminal manœuvres with which La Beaumelle's letter charges him, I am ready publicly to ask Maupertuis's pardon." Thus, the ill-feeling grew ever warmer between these

[1] 1 Correspondance Littéraire, 240.

two combustibles, until there was need only of a very slight occasion to develop a blaze.

The president, too, had an exciting affair upon his hands at this time. He was in desperate feud with an old *protégé* and friend, Samuel Koenig, who had lived for two years at Cirey with Voltaire and Madame du Châtelet, as the lady's tutor in mathematics, a post which he owed to Maupertuis's recommendation. He was now honorably settled in Holland as librarian to the Princess of Orange, and not unknown to the learned men of Europe as an enthusiast for the philosophy of Leibnitz, the first president of the Berlin Academy. It was he who infused Leibnitzian opinions into the mind of Madame du Châtelet, in the very hearing of Voltaire, the apostle of Leibnitz's greatest opponent, Sir Isaac Newton. Koenig remained, however, the grateful and admiring friend of Maupertuis, who was also a Newtonian; and the president, still interested in his welfare, caused him to be elected to a vacant chair in the Berlin Academy. The professor was so keenly gratified by this mark of attention that he came to Berlin in September, 1750, for no other purpose than to see and thank the man to whom he felt himself indebted for substantial services. The president received him with cordiality, and no day passed without their meeting for friendly and philosophic conversation. They had many topics in common, and both were men of varied learning and ardent curiosity. All went well between them until one fatal day, when a subject came under discussion which touched the glory of the illustrious Leibnitz. It was the famous controversy between Leibnitz and Newton upon the discovery of "the infinitely little." Maupertuis maintained that the reply of Leibnitz to Newton consisted of calumnies instead of arguments. Koenig defended his master with the warmth of a hero-worshiper. Maupertuis supported his own view by getting the book, citing passages and comparing dates. "It is all in vain, my poor friend!" cried Koenig; "you will take away nothing from his glory." This to the president of the Berlin Academy and the flattener of the globe! Maupertuis replied that such language was insulting, and bowed him out.[1]

The worthy Koenig, however, was prompt to apologize. He

[1] Vie de Maupertuis, par La Beaumelle, page 139.

called within a day or two upon the president, and this unhappy breach appeared to be healed. Upon his return to his post, soon after, he completed an essay, begun long before, in the course of which one of Maupertuis's most cherished convictions was modestly called in question, and the authority of the sublime Leibnitz once more invoked against him. Maupertuis claimed to be the discoverer of a great principle running through all nature, — the *principle of the least action*, as he termed it. His position was that nature was a strict economist, and accomplished all things by the least force that would answer the purpose. He had read and published a discourse upon this subject, in which he plumed himself exceedingly upon the "discovery," and drew it out into details that appeared both plausible and trivial to the members of other academies. Koenig submitted his essay to the president before printing it, and offered to suppress it if he had the least objection to its publication. Probably without having done more than glance at the manuscript the president gave his free and full consent to its insertion in the printed "Transactions of Leipsic." It appeared therein, in March, 1751, in the Latin language, when Maupertuis took the trouble to examine it, and found the direst offense in the closing passage.

"I will only," wrote Koenig, "add one word in concluding. It appears that M. de Leibnitz had a theory of action much more extended than would now be supposed; for there is a letter of his, written to M. Hermann, in which he speaks thus: 'Action is not what you think it; the consideration of time enters into it; it is as the product of the mass multiplied by the time, or of the time by the living force. I have observed that, in the modifications of motions, it usually becomes either a maximum or a minimum.'"

The offense of this passage was twofold. It showed Leibnitz at once anticipating and contradicting Maupertuis! The president, deeply stirred, wrote politely to Koenig, asking him for the exact date of the letter and the proofs of its authenticity. Koenig replied at his leisure, not aware that his president attached importance to the matter. He wrote, at length, that he did not possess and had not seen the original; but had taken the passage from a copy of the letter given him, with other copies, by Henzy of Berne, executed for treason some

years before. Maupertuis then wrote to the Prussian envoy in Switzerland, and induced the king also to write, urging him to make diligent search for the letter of Leibnitz. After exhaustive rummaging, the letter was not found, the papers of Henzy having been scattered wide after his death. Maupertuis then summoned Koenig to appear within a month before the Academy, with the original of the letter, or proofs that such a letter had existed. The professor, who had already informed the president that he had taken the passage from a copy, neither appeared nor explained; whereupon Maupertuis convened the Academy, and caused the worthy Koenig to be condemned and expelled as *a forger!* This precipitate and most shameful deed was done April 13, 1752, at a session attended by twenty-two members. The excellent Koenig, upon reading the news in the gazettes, wrote a history of the case, so clear, so circumstantial, so supported by documents, that no candid person has ever read it, or will ever read it, without being convinced of his innocence. He now gave the whole of Leibnitz's letter, with two others in a similar strain, the style and tone of which were unmistakably Leibnitzian.

Until he had read Koenig's "Appeal to the Public," Voltaire, absorbed in labor at Potsdam, had not attended to the controversy, and had gathered a slight impression that his enthusiastic Leibnitzian bore of Cirey was rather in the wrong than otherwise. Koenig's "Appeal to the Public" satisfied him that Maupertuis had done the professor a most cruel injury. Others were also convinced; the journals were full of the subject; and the president found himself not so potent with the public as with his dependents in the Academy. He was in a rage of excitement, drank deeply, and was soon seriously indisposed. "A little less liquor [*rogomme*] and a little more dieting will cure you," wrote the king to him. And again, "No more liquor, no more coffee; and, with the aid of time and sobriety, you will be reëstablished."

Meantime, a "Reply from an Academician of Berlin to an Academician of Paris" appeared in the gazettes, stating Koenig's case with a brevity and clearness that betrayed the hand of Voltaire. It did not calm the fiery Maupertuis.

Now, unhappily, the king, anxious for his sick and excited president, and knowing nothing whatever of Koenig's case,

came, as he hoped, to Maupertuis's rescue. He wrote a small pamphlet entitled, "Letter of an Academician of Berlin to an Academician of Paris," in which he gave a weak version of the story as related to him by Maupertuis. He had not even read Koenig's "Appeal to the Public," although copies were in Berlin;[1] his only thought being to save the life and credit of the president of his darling Academy. This pamphlet was speedily republished, with the royal arms on the cover, and thus Europe was notified that the King of Prussia believed Professor Koenig guilty of forging evidence to rob a brother *savan*, to rob a benefactor, of his glory as a discoverer. It was a hasty, well-meant, bad action on the king's part, as the reader may see by referring to the pamphlet in the works of the king.[2] Maupertuis might as well have written upon a question of tactics or army discipline.

It was on such occasions that Voltaire was wont to use and exhaust the resources of the literary art. He now wrote and published a letter to Professor Koenig, which the pen of mortal has not surpassed for elegant, quiet effectiveness; so entertaining that the dullest reader must hold out to the end; so convincing that to prejudice itself it must have given pause. The art of it is altogether exquisite. He poses Koenig advantageously against Maupertuis by the device of sending him two copies of his "Louis XIV.," one for himself, the other for the library of her Royal Highness, "to whom I beg you to make this homage acceptable, with my profound respect." After some chatty paragraphs upon his History, he glides into his subject, which he treats in the tone of the familiar letter, with equal moderation and force. The president's error was merely "a mistake of self-love." He did not sufficiently scrutinize the passage from Leibnitz sent him beforehand for his examination.

"He believed it contained his thought; it contains his refutation. Was it necessary, then, for him to employ so much artifice and violence, that he should fatigue so many powers, and that he should pursue those who condemn to-day his error and his proceedings, for four lines of Leibnitz ill-understood, for a dispute which is in no degree enlightened, and the foundation of which seems to be altogether frivolous?

[1] 15 Œuvres de Frédéric, 60.
[2] 15 Œuvres, 59.

Pardon me this freedom; you know, monsieur, that I am a little enthusiastic when I think I have the truth. You have been a witness that I sacrifice my conviction to no one. You remember the two years which we passed together in a philosophic retreat with a lady of astonishing genius and worthy to be instructed by you in mathematics. However warm the friendship which attached me to her and to you, I always took sides against your opinion and hers in the controversy concerning *living forces*. I maintained audaciously the view of M. de Mairan against both of you; and, what is amusing, when the lady afterwards wrote against M. de Mairan upon that point of mathematics, I corrected her work, and wrote against her. I did the same upon the *monades* and the *preëstablished harmony*, in which, I confess to you, that I do not believe at all. I sustained all my heresies without the least detriment to my affection. I could not sacrifice what appeared to me to be the truth to a person for whom I would have sacrificed my life. You will not, then, be surprised when I say, with that intrepid frankness which is known to you, that all those disputes in which there is a blending of metaphysics and geometry seems to me to be mere *jeux d'esprit*, which exercise the mind and not enlighten it. . . . . If M. de Maupertuis has recently invented that principle of the *least action*, it is very well; but it seems to me that he need not have disguised a thing so clear in ambiguous terms."

But no extracts avail to convey an idea of the aptness and graceful force of this letter. It avenged and completely restored Koenig. But it was not soothing to the president of the Berlin Academy, who was still confined to his house by indisposition.

CHAPTER VIII.

"DOCTOR AKAKIA."

At this point the affair might well have rested; justice was done. If M. Koenig had been deeply wronged, he was magnificently compensated, and he stood before Europe in a really brilliant light. Maupertuis was humiliated, it is true, but he still held his place; a king had defended him; and the public does not delay long to forget or forgive the error of a meritorious man who continues to serve it.

Rogomme had proved a pernicious beverage to the flattener of the earth; but, unfortunately, he sought to alleviate the tedium of his convalescence by a liquid still more blasting. It was ink that finished poor Maupertuis. He now set about writing a series of "Letters" in the style of the "Thoughts" of his friend and *protégé*, La Beaumelle; nay, even more crotchety, abrupt, and ridiculous. He said expressly in his preface, "I free myself from the reserves to which I should not be able to submit. I shall follow no order; I shall treat subjects as they present themselves to my mind; I shall indulge, perhaps, in contradictions; upon every subject I shall say what I think at the moment of writing; and what subjects are there upon which a man ought always to think in the same manner?"

Readers who are acquainted with these twenty-three "Letters" of Maupertuis's only from Voltaire's burlesque repetitions may have imagined that Voltaire invented or exaggerated their absurdity. Not so; Maupertuis, president of the Berlin Academy, seriously made the suggestions which Voltaire imputes to him. He does actually propose the excavation of an enormous hole in the earth, that we may know something of its contents. He suggests that one of the pyramids of Egypt should be blown up, that mankind may at length ascertain the purpose for which they were built. "The use of gunpowder," he says, "would render easy the complete

overturn of one of those pyramids; and the Grand Seigneur would surrender them with perfect willingness to the least curiosity of a king of France." The Latin language, he observes, is learned imperfectly and with great difficulty; why not create a Latin city, where the clergymen would preach in Latin, the lawyers plead in Latin, the actors speak in Latin? "The young men," he adds, "who would repair from the countries of Europe to that city, would learn more Latin in a year than they do at the colleges in five or six years." Doctors, he thought, ought never to be paid unless they cure a patient. He expressed the opinion that light could be thrown on the nature of the human mind by dissecting the brains of living men. But what men? In Patagonia there was then supposed to be a race of giants; and he advised an expedition to that unknown region, for the inspection of the brains of men ten or twelve feet high. Nearer home, the brains of criminals condemned to death might be utilized for this purpose. Some people, he adds, would think there was cruelty in such a mode of death; but scruples of that nature must not be regarded. "Compared with the human race, a man is nothing; a criminal is still less than nothing."

Maupertuis was an early friend of vivisection, and had been in the habit of experimenting upon living cats. A duchess said to him one day, "How is it that you who love cats can practice such cruelty?" He replied, "Madame, one has under-cats for experiments of that nature."

He had been, apparently, much impressed with La Mettrie's constant assertion that the something which men called *soul* resulted from the working of the "machine" which they style *body*. He thought that as man now sees the past, so he might, by exalting his soul with opium, discern the future also, and, perhaps, by retarding the development of the body, through some process yet to be discovered, could prolong life indefinitely.

These samples will suffice of a work such as only a philosopher mad with confinement and *rogomme* could have given to a scoffing world. Voltaire, at first, really thought him a madman. "In the midst of these quarrels," he wrote to Madame Denis, October 1, 1752, "Maupertuis has become entirely *fou*. You are aware that he was chained at Montpellier in one of his

attacks twenty years ago." The king, however, who thought little better of the book than Voltaire, wrote to compliment the author. "I have read your 'Letters,'" he began, "which, despite your critics, are well written and profound. I repeat what I have said to you before: put your spirit in repose, my dear Maupertuis, and regard not the buzzing of the insects of the air. Your reputation is too well established to be overturned by the first wind." In all ways possible the King of Prussia supported the waning prestige of the president of his Academy. So he would have backed a general in command, whose manœuvres he privately censured, but whose authority and reputation he felt it necessary to maintain.

"Oh, that mine enemy had written a book!" Maupertuis had written a book; Voltaire held it in his hands; and at the same time came new provocation. Almost simultaneously issued from the press the "Letters" of the president and the avowed edition of the king's "Letter" defending him against Voltaire and Koenig, — the edition bearing on the title-page the arms of the reigning house of Prussia. Never did a cat pounce upon a mouse with such gayety of heart as Voltaire upon the president's foolish little volume; nor ever did a cat amuse itself with such a variety of ingenious, playful, graceful torture as that to which he now subjected Maupertuis. In the very palace of the king, too! Voltaire was still living and toiling in the château at Potsdam, correcting the king's verses and sending him his own; no word having yet passed between them upon this affair of Maupertuis and Koenig; each affecting not to know that the other had publicly taken sides.

"The king's pamphlet [wrote Voltaire to Madame Denis, October 18, 1752] has been reprinted at Berlin, with the eagle of Prussia, a crown, a sceptre, upon the title-page. The eagle, the sceptre, and the crown were much astonished to find themselves there. Every one shrugs his shoulders, casts down his eyes, and dares not speak. If truth is a stranger to the throne, it is especially so when a king turns author. Coquettes, kings, poets, are accustomed to be flattered. Frederic reunites those three crowns. There is no way of making the truth pierce that triple wall of self-love. Maupertuis has not succeeded in being Plato, but he wishes his master to be Denys of Syracuse. The rarest thing in this cruel and ridiculous affair is that the king does not in the least like Maupertuis, in whose favor he employs

his sceptre and his pen. Plato came near dying of grief for not having been at certain little suppers to which I was admitted, and the king has confessed to us a hundred times that the ferocious vanity of Maupertuis rendered him unsociable. . . . . I have no sceptre, but I have a pen; and I have, I know not how, cut that pen in such a way as to turn Plato a little into ridicule upon his giants, upon his dissections, upon his predictions, upon his impertinent quarrel with Koenig. . . . . I have against me self-love and despotic power, two very dangerous entities."

He had no sceptre, but he had a pen! In this remark we have the key to much that follows. It became a contest between a young king with "a hundred and fifty thousand mustachios in his service" and an elderly man, of infirm health, armed only with a gray goose-quill. Twice already he had employed this terrible weapon in the strife; now he lifted it a third time, and produced the first part of that "Diatribe of Doctor Akakia, Physician to the Pope," of which Macaulay says that no one with the least sense of humor can read it without "laughing till he cries."

Akakia is a Greek word meaning *guileless*, *innocent*. The "Doctor Akakia" of Voltaire is a physician who has read the volume of "Letters," bearing on the title-page the name of Maupertuis, president of the Berlin Academy, in which the public are advised not to pay doctors unless they effect a cure, and in which other ideas are advanced not less peculiar. *Can* the president of an Academy have really written such things? It is impossible, thinks the amiable Akakia.

"Nothing [he remarks] is more common to-day than for young, unknown authors to publish under known names works little worthy of them. There are charlatans of every kind. Here is one who has taken the name of the president of a very illustrious Academy in order to peddle off rubbish singular enough. It is demonstrated that the respectable president is not the author of the books attributed to him; for that admirable philosopher, who discovered that nature always acts by the simplest laws, and who so wisely adds that she is always disposed to be sparing, would have certainly spared the small number of persons capable of reading him the trouble of reading twice over the same thing, — first in the book entitled his 'Works,' and then in that called his 'Letters.' One third at least of the latter is copied from the other, word for word. That great man, so incapable of charlatanism, would not have given to the public letters written to no one, and,

above all, would not have fallen into certain trifling faults which are pardonable only in a young man.

"I believe as much as possible that it is not at all the interest of my profession that induces me to speak on this occasion; but I shall be pardoned if I find it a little hard that this writer should treat physicians as he treats his booksellers. He is unwilling the doctor should be paid when, unfortunately, a patient does not get well. An artist, he says, is not paid for painting a bad picture. Oh, young man, how hard and unjust you are! Did not the Duke of Orleans, Regent of France, pay magnificently for the daub with which Coipel adorned the gallery of the Palais-Royal? Does a client deprive his advocate of just compensation because he has lost his cause? A physician promises his endeavors, not a cure. He does his best, and he is paid. What! would you be jealous even of the doctors?

"What would a man say, I pray you, who should have, for example, a pension of twelve hundred ducats a year, for having discoursed of mathematics and metaphysics, for having dissected two frogs, and for having had his portrait taken in a fur cap, if the treasurer should address him thus: 'Sir, you are cut down a hundred ducats for writing that there are stars shaped like mill-stones; a hundred ducats more for having written that a comet will come to steal our moon, and carry its attempts even against the sun itself; a hundred ducats more for having imagined that comets composed entirely of gold or diamond will fall upon the earth. You are taxed three hundred ducats for having affirmed that children are formed by attraction, that the left eye attracts the right leg, etc. We cannot reduce you less than four hundred ducats for having imagined that the nature of the soul could be understood by means of opium and by dissecting giants' heads,' etc., etc. It is clear that the poor philosopher, when his accounts were made up, would lose all his revenue. Would it not be very easy after that for us other doctors to laugh at him, and to assure him that rewards are intended only for those who write useful things, and not for those who are known only through their desire to make themselves known?

"Our young reasoner pretends that physicians should be empirical only, and advises them to banish theory. What would you say of a man who should advise us not to employ architects in building-houses, but only masons, who cut stone at hap-hazard? He gives also the sage advice to neglect anatomy. Here we shall have the surgeons on our side. We are only astonished that an author who has had some little obligations to the surgeons of Montpellier in maladies which require a great knowledge of the interior of the head, and of some other parts appertaining to anatomy, should have so little gratitude.

"The same author, unversed apparently, in history, in speaking of his plan to render the punishments of criminals useful by making experiments upon their bodies, asserts that this suggestion has never been carried out. He does not know, what every one else knows, that in the time of Louis XI. the operation for the stone was performed for the first time in France upon a man condemned to death; that the late Queen of England caused the inoculation for the small-pox to be tried upon four criminals; and there are other similar examples.

"But if our author is ignorant, we are obliged to admit that he has by way of compensation a singular imagination. He wishes, as a physician, that we should avail ourselves of the centrifugal force for curing apoplexy, and make the patient spin around. The idea, in truth, is not his own; but he gives it an air entirely new. He advises us to cover a sick man with pitch, or to pierce his skin with needles. If ever he practices medicine, and proposes such remedies, it is highly probable that his patients will follow the advice which he gives them, — not to pay the doctor.

"But, what is strange, this cruel enemy of the faculty, who wishes so pitilessly to reduce our income, proposes, by way of solacing us, to ruin our patients. He orders (for he is despotic) that every doctor should treat but one disease; so that if a man has the gout, fever, cholera, sore eyes, and the earache he will have to pay five doctors instead of one. But perhaps it is also his intention that we should receive only the fifth part of the usual fee. I see clearly the malice of that suggestion. Forthwith, the pious will be advised to have spiritual directors for each vice: one for serious ambition concerning little things; one for jealousy hidden under a hard and imperious air; one for the rage of intriguing prodigiously for trifles; one for other mean foibles. But we are wandering from the subject. We return to our colleagues.

"The best doctor, he says, is he who reasons least. He appears to be in philosophy as faithful to that axiom as Father Canaie was in theology. Nevertheless, despite his hatred of reasoning, we perceive that he has made profound meditations upon the art of prolonging life. First, he agrees, with all sensible people, and we congratulate him upon it, that our forefathers lived from eight to nine hundred years. Then, having discovered by his own efforts, and independently of Leibnitz, that maturity is not the period of virility, but of death, he proposes to retard that maturity, as people preserve eggs by hindering them from hatching. It is a beautiful secret, and we advise him to secure to himself the honor of this discovery in some poultry-yard, or by a criminal sentence of some Academy.

"It is evident from the account we have rendered that, if these im-

aginary letters were really written by a president, it could only be a president of Bedlam, and that they are incontestably, as we have said, the production of a young man who has wished to adorn himself with the name of a sage respected, as we know, in all Europe, and who has consented to be pronounced a great man. We have seen sometimes, at the Carnival in Italy, a harlequin disguised as an archbishop; but he is quickly discovered from the manner in which he gives the benediction. Sooner or later a man is found out, which recalls a fable of La Fontaine: 'A little end of an ear, unfortunately protruded, reveals the cheat and the mistake.' In the present case, we see ears entire."

At this point the modest and gentle Akakia, physician to the Pope, submits the book to the Holy Inquisition, deferring humbly to the infallible wisdom of that learned tribunal, "in which, as is well known, physicians have so much faith." Voltaire knew all the power of repetition, and he used it in this Diatribe with killing effect. Play-goers are familiar with this device, having seen many a dull play enlivened by the mere repetition of a comic phrase. By bringing the Inquisition upon the scene, he gets three opportunities to repeat the absurdest ideas of the president, as well as to introduce several not before mentioned. First, he gives the decree of the Inquisition anathematizing the attempt to prove the existence of God by an algebraic formula. Next, follows the judgment of the Collège de La Sapience, condemning Maupertuis's vaunted discovery of the minimum of force, "half taken from Leibnitz." Then we have the elaborate report of a sub-committee appointed by the chief of the Inquisition to examine the "Letters" of "the young author," already reviewed by Doctor Akakia. Here the choice morsels of absurdity in Maupertuis's book are joyously tossed in the air, for the diversion of Monsieur l'Inquisiteur. But, laugh as he might at the notion of dissecting giants twelve feet high in order to get to the bottom of the nature of human intelligence, there was matter in the book in which the Inquisitor could not find amusement.

"He will laugh no more when he shall see that everybody can become a prophet; for the author finds no more difficulty in seeing the future than the past. . . . . We do not yet know whether he will be a prophet in his own country, nor whether he will be one of the greater or minor prophets; but we fear

much that he will be a prophet of evil, since even in his treatise upon "Happiness" he speaks only of affliction. . . . . He ought again to be assured that it will be very difficult for him to execute his scheme of digging a hole to the centre of the earth (where, apparently, he wishes to hide his shame at having advanced such ideas). That hole would require the excavation of at least three or four hundred leagues of country, which could derange the system of the balance of Europe."

In conclusion, the committee bestows upon the young "candidate" its affectionate admonition. The good Doctor Akakia is requested to administer to him some cooling drinks, and the examiners exhort him to study in some university and to be modest there. But the most important advice which they give him is the following: —

"If ever some fellow-student comes to him to suggest in a friendly spirit an opinion different from his own; if he confides to him that he supports that opinion upon the authority of Leibnitz and several other philosophers; if, in particular, he shows him a letter of Leibnitz which formally contradicts our candidate, let not the said candidate jump to the conclusion, and proclaim it everywhere, that a letter of Leibnitz has been forged for the purpose of despoiling him of the glory of being a discoverer.

"Let him not take the error into which he has fallen upon a point of dynamics, which is totally devoid of utility, for an admirable discovery.

"If that comrade, after having communicated to him several times his work, in which he combats the candidate in terms the most polite and with eulogy, should print it with his consent, let him beware of causing that work of an opponent to pass for a crime of academic high treason.

"If that comrade declares several times that he obtained the letter of Leibnitz, as well as several others, from a man who died some years before, let not the candidate take a malignant advantage of the avowal; let him never demand, in a frivolous dispute, that a dead man should come to life for the purpose of bringing back the useless original draught of a letter of Leibnitz, and let him reserve that miracle for the time when he shall prophesy; let him not compromise any one in a controversy about nothing, which vanity can render important; and let him not bring the gods into a war between rats and frogs.

"We conclude by exhorting him to be docile, to engage in serious studies, and not in vain cabals; for what a *savan* gains in intrigues he loses in genius, just as, in mechanics, what is gained in time is lost in

force. We have seen but too often young people, who have begun by giving high hopes and good works, end with writing nothing but folly, because they have wished to be skillful courtiers, instead of skillful writers; because they have substituted vanity for study, and the dissipation which weakens the intellect for the application which strengthens it. They have been praised, and then ceased to be praiseworthy; they have desired to seem, and ceased to be; for when, in an author, the sum of errors equals the sum of absurdities, *nothingness is the equivalent of his existence* [*le néant vaut son existence*]." [1]

Here ended the first portion of the "Diatribe of Doctor Akakia," as written in the château of Potsdam in November, 1752. Considering the conduct of Maupertuis toward Koenig, which might have been ruinous but for Voltaire's interference, we cannot regard this light, bantering "Diatribe" as an unjust or an excessive admonition. Maupertuis had been arbitrary, precipitate, and cruel toward an ancient friend.

But Akakia was not yet printed; it was a mere manuscript in the palace of an absolute king, who had adopted the defense of his president as something due to the royal authority. Nothing could be printed in Potsdam without the king's permission, and that permission had to be attested by his sign-manual. In these circumstances, it required almost as rare a kind of person to get the Diatribe before the public as to compose it. He had had this year an amicable controversy with Chaplain Formey upon the character of Lord Bolingbroke, whose recent death had called forth much hostile comment in more than one country. Bolingbroke was a deist; and, although neither his life nor his writings adorned the name, absurd importance was then attached to a dissolute nobleman's theory of the universe. Even at the present time, Dr. Johnson's brutal remark upon Lord Bolingbroke's posthumous works is occasionally quoted without disapproval. Voltaire lamented the confused, declamatory nothingness of his early friend's writings; but not the less did he defend his honor against defamation. In a tract of thirty or forty pages he endeavored to show that, because a man was compelled to differ in opinion from many of his fellow-citizens, he did not thereby forfeit all right to consideration. The boisterous and open debauchery of Bolingbroke's youth — that bad recoil from the repellent

[1] A noted phrase from Maupertuis.

Puritanism of his early home — was not forgotten by the defenders of the faith. Voltaire touched upon this point very happily. He denied the relevancy of the argument: —

"In what case [he inquired] is it permitted us to reproach a man for the disorders of his life? Perhaps in this case alone: when his conduct is inconsistent with his teachings. We might fairly contrast the sermons of a certain famous preacher of our time with the thefts which he committed upon Lord Galloway, and with his gallant intrigues. We might compare the sermons of the celebrated chaplain of the Invalides and those of Fautin, curate of Versailles, with the suits brought against them for having seduced and plundered their penitents. We might compare the conduct of so many Popes and bishops with the religion which they sustained by fire and sword. We might exhibit, on the one hand, their rapines, their illegitimate children, their assassinations, and, on the other, their bulls and their pastoral addresses. Writing on such subjects, we are excusable if we fail in charity, which requires us to conceal the faults of our brethren. But who told the defamer of Lord Bolingbroke that he loved wine and women? And suppose he did love them: if he had had as many concubines as David, as Solomon, as the Grand Turk, should we know any better the true author of the Pentateuch?"

This ingenious and amusing pamphlet Voltaire read to the king, and besought his permission to have it printed at the royal press in Potsdam. Frederic most willingly assented; the essay was entirely to his taste, and he liked to displease, in a harmless way, the orthodox family, so nearly related to him, who occupied the royal houses of England. He wrote the permit in the usual way on the last leaf of the manuscript, which the author at once handed to the official printer. After receiving and returning a few pages of proof, he asked the printer to give him back the manuscript for a day or two, as he wished to make some alterations and corrections. The printer complying, the author gave him Akakia in its stead. When the Diatribe was all in type, he finished by supplying the remainder of the Bolingbroke, on the last page of which was the royal permit.[1] No sooner had he obtained printed copies than he took care to send one or two beyond the swoop of the Prussian eagle.

It was, as I conjecture, in the midst of this audacious opera-

[1] 2 Mémoires sur Voltaire, par Wagnière et Longchamp, 345.

tion, but when already the Diatribe was beyond the author's or the king's control, that some tell-tale conveyed to Frederic an intimation that Voltaire had written something terrible in ridicule of the president of the Berlin Academy. The king sent for him. He came, and then the king spoke to him on the subject of his affair with Maupertuis for the first time. The interview is variously related, but there is no doubt that Frederic addressed him at some stage of the affair in terms like these: —

"They say you have written a satire against Maupertuis, very witty and severe. I will speak to you with freedom and as a friend. I will not say that Maupertuis has done you no injury, nor that you have done him none. You have both a right to complain, and for his sake alone I would surrender him to you willingly. But consider: I called that man into my service; I placed him at the head of my Academy; I have treated him with the same consideration as a cabinet minister; I have admitted him to my most familiar society; I have allowed him to marry one of the ladies of honor to the queen, the daughter of one of my ministers, a lady belonging to one of the most ancient and important families of my kingdom. If you dishonor him, I shall certainly be ridiculed. The nobility of Prussia will be mortified, and they will attribute the scandal to my forbearance. Reflect upon these circumstances, and see what I ought to expect from your friendship."

Imagine much more to the same purpose, with abundant compliments to the genius of an author who could throw away a dozen Akakias without detriment to his glory. In a moment of effusion (so the tale continues) Voltaire offered to bring the manuscript of his Diatribe, and place it at the disposal of the king, protesting, at the same time, that he deemed the production just and moderate.

"Bring it at once!" cried the king. "I will wait for you; such noble intentions must not be postponed."

In a few moments Voltaire was again in the king's room, reading to him the "Diatribe of Doctor Akakia," at which, it is said, his majesty "laughed to dislocation." The termination of this interview is given in two ways. One version is that, at the end of the reading, Voltaire threw the manuscript into the fire, to the equal sorrow of both, and that, while the

book was burning, the monarch and the author performed fantastic dances around the fire-place. But the tradition in the Voltairean circle, as reported by the Abbé Duvernet, is even more remarkable. According to this version, Voltaire threw the manuscript into the fire; but, before it was consumed, the king, unwilling that so amusing a production should be forever lost, snatched it blazing from the flames. Voltaire, insisting on the sacrifice, placed it again on the fire with the tongs. Again the king rescued it, in spite of Voltaire's utmost efforts. Duvernet thus concludes the story: "The king burned his sleeves and saved the book; and the two philosophers finished by laughing and embracing."

These details may be erroneous. It is, however, evident from the correspondence that scenes *like* these occurred between the king and the author, and that Frederic remained for some days under the impression that he had saved his president from the catastrophe threatened him by the publication of Akakia. A singed manuscript under lock and key, with "La Pucelle" and other forbidden fruit, could do Maupertuis little harm, and bring no scandal upon the nobility of Prussia; or, as Frederic himself wrote to Voltaire, years after (in 1759), when this tempest had blown past, "A man may write what he pleases, and with impunity, too, without having a hundred and fifty thousand men, provided he prints nothing of it."

CHAPTER IX.

LEAVING PRUSSIA.

Before venturing upon such proceedings as these in the palace of a king, he had nearly concluded preparations for retreat. In September, 1752, weeks before Akakia was written, he told Madame Denis that he was about to invest the large capital he had in Berlin in an annuity for both their lives upon the French estates of the Duke of Wurtemberg. The terms were agreed upon, and the duke had given his word; "only the word of a prince, it is true, but princes keep their word in small matters." He had lost money, he added, with bankers, with devotees, with people of the Old Testament, who scrupled to eat a larded chicken, and would rather die than not be idle on the Sabbath or not steal on Sunday; "but I have never lost anything with nobles except my time." He assured her that she could count upon the solidity of this investment, and upon his departure. "I shall set sail from the island of Calypso as soon as my cargo is ready, and much more glad shall I be to find my niece again than old Ulysses was to find his old wife." This was written September 9, 1752, in the château of Potsdam.

Whither was he going, then? His desire had been to return to his own house at Paris, and resume there the way of life interrupted two years before. All his labors in Prussia were done with a view to a happy return to his native land; particularly his history of Louis XIV. Madame Denis still kept his house there, and spent his money with a free hand. She had written a comedy lately, "The Coquette," which she desired to see performed at the national theatre. It required all the tact of her uncle to save her from that rash experiment, without giving her mortal offense.

Longchamp was factotum no more. Madame Denis had detected him in copying the manuscripts confided to his care,

including works and portions of works not less perilous than precious to the author of them. A Madame Lafond and her husband, servants inherited from Madame du Châtelet, had taken part in the treason. Madame Denis, with something of her uncle's own energy, had surprised the Lafonds in their room, Longchamp in his, and had discovered traitorous material in both. All literature then was brigandage, as it ever must be in the absence of legal protection; and Voltaire, more than any other author, was a victim to such infidelities. But he had never had such occasion for alarm as now, when he had resolved to abandon Prussia, without being quite sure of a permission to return to France. He met this emergency with so much skill as to avert immediate calamity. It was not a case for an explosion of anger; the secretary was the repository of too many dangerous secrets for that. Voltaire wrote to him in gentle terms, urging him to repentance and reparation, promising pardon and reward if he told all the truth. The reply of Longchamp gives us an insight into the situation of Voltaire at this period which, perhaps, no other document affords. It shows us what a bold game he played in defying the King of Prussia when difficulties were accumulating against his peaceful settlement anywhere else on the continent. He might well temporize with his secretary.

"I opened your letter with trembling [wrote the traitor, March 30, 1752], fearing to find you as angry with me as my imprudence deserved. But I discovered in it a forbearance which I had no right to expect. I recognized how wrong I had been, and the gravity of the fault I had committed. You promise me pardon, which is the object of my desire, and which I believe I have merited by my repentance.

. . . . "As to your own works, I have never taken away any manuscript or any book. I copied and had the porter copy the 'General History,' some leaves of the campaigns of the king, and some other fragments. With these papers was also found 'La Pucelle,' which I copied at Cirey from the manuscript of Madame du Châtelet, when I did not know you were the author. I have explained everything to your niece, and the whole has been burned. While I had those copies, no part of them went out of my possession, and I let no one see them. I have made the sacrifice entirely, and have kept back nothing whatever. . . . . The goodness of your heart reassures me, and makes me hope that, notwithstanding my unhappy weakness in

betraying your confidence, you will not refuse me some marks of that benevolence which you promised me formerly, and that, by an act of pure generosity, you will enable me to form an establishment, and let me owe to you alone my happiness and fortune. I await with confidence the fulfillment of your promises, and am, with veneration and the most profound respect, monsieur, your very humble and very obedient servant." [1]

Voltaire accepted his penitence, and closed his mouth with benefits. He paid him the eighteen months' wages due, and gave him an equal sum as a gratuity. Provided thus with a small capital, Longchamp married, set up in the Rue St. Jacques as a dealer in maps, charts, and other geographical ware, in which he throve for many years, and lived long enough to welcome his aged master to Paris in 1778.

Such narrow escapes as this could not reassure the author of so much explosive material; and now that his "Louis XIV." was under the ban, the work which he had hoped would secure his triumphal welcome home, he may well have been in doubt whither to direct his steps. The subject was much in his thoughts for the next two years.

Meanwhile, he was in Prussia, chamberlain to the King of Prussia, with the cross and key upon his breast, in the king's own house, with the king's guards all about him, and a "Diatribe of Doctor Akakia" in the press. He had never before been so much a king himself. From all quarters still came new attestations of the welcome given to his "Louis XIV." "As yet," wrote Lord Chesterfield at this time, introducing his son Stanhope, "I have read it only four times, because I wish to forget it a little before reading it a fifth. But I find that impossible. . . . . Above all, I thank you for the light you have thrown upon the follies and outrages of the different sects." Ridicule and contempt, he thought, were the only treatment suited to those madmen and impostors. In the theatres of Europe, Voltaire was still the unrivaled living dramatist; the tender "Zaïre" still drew nightly tears, and the Ciceronian swell of "Rome Sauvée" was relished in the cloister not less than on the stage. At present, in authorship, there is a subdivision of labor; but he essayed many kinds, and had popular success in all. Multitudes of people in Europe could have

[1] 2 Mémoires sur Voltaire, par Longchamp et Wagnière, 347.

sincerely echoed Lord Chesterfield in the letter just quoted: "Whenever I read your last history, I desire that you should be always an historian; but when I read 'Rome Sauvée,' I wish you to be always a poet."[1]

To resume the story of Akakia. For several days the King of Prussia appears to have remained under the delusion that the Diatribe was to be merely one of its author's many secret manuscripts. Conceive his amazement, his boiling indignation, when, about November 20, 1752, he discovered that it had been printed at Potsdam, in his own printing-office, by his own printer! He had the printer summoned and interrogated. That official in terror exhibited the royal permit, written in the king's own hand; his innocence was manifest. The edition was seized, as well as every copy that could be found. Fredersdorff, the king's factotum, confronted the author, who resorted to his usual device of total and emphatic disavowal. He knew nothing about the printing of a Diatribe; people were much given to corrupting his servants and procuring copies of his works filled with errors. Fredersdorff, by the king's orders, threatened him with fine, as well as arrest, but without eliciting anything like confession. Upon this, Frederic wrote to him thus: —

"Your effrontery astonishes me. After what you have just done, which is as clear as the day, you persist in denying, instead of confessing yourself guilty. Do not imagine that you will make people believe that black is white; when one does not see it is (often) because he does not wish to see; but if you push the affair to the end, I will cause the whole to be printed, and it will then be seen that, if your works entitle you to statues, your conduct deserves chains.

"P. S. The printer has been interrogated; he has revealed everything."[2]

Tradition adds that a sentry was placed at the door of the offender, with orders to let no one pass except his servants. After reading the king's letter, he appears to have written his answer under it, on the same sheet of paper, and sent it back to the king by the same messenger. "This note," says the editor of Frederic's works, "was written under the preceding:" —

[1] Chesterfield's Letters to his Son. August 27, 1752.

[2] 22 Œuvres de Frédéric, 301.

"Ah, *mon Dieu*, sire! In my present condition, too! I swear to you again, upon my life, which I willingly renounce, that it is a frightful calumny. I implore you to have all my servants examined. What! You judge without hearing me! I ask justice and death."

This did not appease the king nor remove the sentinel. Some days passed, during which the offender remained, as we may say, "under arrest," though not deprived of his weapon, which he continued to use with his usual industry. Frederic, November 27th, wrote with his own hand a pledge for Voltaire to sign, which he sent him, apparently, as a condition of his release: —

"Potsdam, November 27, 1752. I promise his majesty that, so long as he does me the favor to lodge me at the château, I will write against no one: neither against the government of France, nor against the ministers, nor against other sovereigns, nor against illustrious men of letters, to whom I will render the respect which is their due. I will not abuse the letters of his majesty, and I will govern myself in a manner becoming a man of letters, who has the honor to be a chamberlain of his majesty, and who lives with respectable people."

This curious document, in the king's hand, is still preserved in the Prussian archives. Voltaire did not sign it. Instead of putting his name, he appended on the same paper a letter to the king, commenting in a skillful and delicate manner upon some of the absurdities of the pledge drawn up for him.

"I shall execute, sire, all the orders of your majesty, and my heart will have no reluctance to obey you. I implore you again to consider that I have never written against any government, least of all against that under which I was born, and which I left for no other reason than to come and finish my life at your feet. I have been historiographer of France, and in that character I have written the 'History of Louis XIV.,' and of the campaigns of Louis XV., which I have sent to M. d'Argenson. My voice and my pen have been consecrated to my country, as they now are to you. I implore you to have the goodness to examine the grounds of the quarrel with Maupertuis. I implore you to believe that I forget this quarrel, since you command it. I submit without hesitation to all your will. If your majesty had ordered me not to defend myself, and not

to enter into this literary dispute, I should have obeyed with the same submission. I entreat you to spare an old age borne down with sickness and pain, and to believe that I shall die as much attached to you as on the day when I arrived at your court."[1]

The ingenuity of this epistle may have had more weight with an angry monarch than its justice. After an arrest of "eight days," the sentinel was withdrawn, and the offender was free to go and come.

Frederic's circle of supper companions was diminishing; the worthy Darget was about to return to France, his place supplied by another Frenchman, a recent fugitive from the land of Boyer and the Sorbonne, — the Abbé de Prades. Maupertuis was not available for supper gayeties at present. Strange to say, scarcely any one could long endure the envied companionship of this most companionable of kings; and those who remained longest besought long leaves of absence. Frederic clung to Voltaire. He did not resume at once friendly converse with the author of Akakia; but, doubtless, would have quickly done so, but for new and worse offenses. If the king could only have complied with Voltaire's request, and "examined the *grounds* of the quarrel with Maupertuis," he would have managed this affair better than he did. But, unhappily, he was a king, and Maupertuis was his president.

Some days after the affair of the Diatribe, the court removed to Berlin for the Christmas festivities. Voltaire came also; but found lodgings at a friend's house, not in the royal palace as before. Frederic was at peace with regard to Akakia. He believed that he had terrified Voltaire by the menace of a great fine, which Fredersdorff had conveyed to the capitalist, who was about to invest a large sum with the Duke of Wurtemberg. "Fear nothing, my dear Maupertuis," wrote the king, December 10, 1752; "the affair of the libels is finished. I have spoken out so plainly to the man, I have washed his head so thoroughly, that I do not believe he will repeat the offense. I have frightened him on the side of the purse, and it has had all the effect I expected. I have declared to him plumply that my house is to be a sanctuary, and not a retreat for brigands and scoundrels to distil poisons in."

[1] 22 Œuvres de Frédéric, 302.

He little knew his man. Scarcely had he slept in the capital of his kingdom than word was brought to him that the "Diatribe of Doctor Akakia" was for sale in the Berlin bookstores; an edition having been printed in Leipsic or Dresden simultaneously with that of Potsdam. The sensation was unspeakable! The empty and pompous Maupertuis was not beloved in Berlin; and many loyal Prussians secretly chuckled at the Diatribe who did not publicly commend it. Measures had been taken by the author to have copies so widely distributed in the city that some of them would be likely to escape the most vigilant pursuit. The respectable Formey, Protestant clergyman, perpetual secretary to the Berlin Academy, opponent and friend of Voltaire, received the first copy, on which *some one* had written,

"Quidquid delirant reges, plectentur Achivi;"

implying that when kings lose their senses it goes hard with the people. The prudent Formey tells us that he shuddered as he read the Diatribe, and carefully put his copy away without showing it to a single person, foreseeing what must follow. His precaution was fruitless. The next post brought more copies; not enough for the demand, and they commanded a great price.[1] One copy, however, of such a work will suffice for a large circle, and in a few days the court and society of Berlin were bursting with the comicalities of Akakia. The author himself was a little alarmed at what he had done, — such a difference is there between a singed manuscript in a closet and a printed pamphlet that convulses every idle inhabitant of a large city, and makes great companies of polite people scream with laughter. What would the king do? was a serious question for Voltaire at this time.

"As I have not," he wrote to Madame Denis, December 18, 1752, "a hundred and fifty thousand mustachios in my service, I do not in the least pretend to make war. I only think to desert becomingly, to take care of my health, to see you again, to forget this dream of three years. I see plainly that the orange has been squeezed; it is necessary now to think of saving the rind. . . . . The puzzle is how to get away from here. I can ask leave only on the ground of my health, but there is no way of saying that I am going to the waters of Plombières

[1] Souvenirs d'un Citoyen, par Formey, page 270.

in the month of December. There is here a kind of minister of the Holy Gospel named Pérard, a Frenchman like myself. He asked permission to go to France on private business. The king had an answer sent him that the king knew his private business better than he did himself, and that he had no need to go to Paris."

A few days after, on Sunday afternoon, December 24, 1752, Collini, Voltaire's secretary, saw from his window some strange proceedings in the street near their lodgings. It proved to be the public burning of a book by the hands of the executioner, with ceremonies not unlike those which so frequently advertised interesting works in Paris during that century. Collini, being an Italian, did not understand the performance, and told Voltaire what was going on under the windows of his abode. "I'll bet," said he, "it is my Doctor they are burning." It was his Doctor. At three public places in the city of Berlin the Diatribe was burned that Sunday. Collini continues, "Soon after the execution the Marquis d'Argens and the Abbé de Prades called; perhaps sent by the king, that he might learn how Voltaire took it. Doubtless he felt the insult. Mere jests, he thought, ought not to provoke a defamatory act, and one usually accompanied by an arrest. Nevertheless, strong in conscious rectitude, and sure that he had committed no crime, he ended by making a joke of the execution; but he was more than ever resolved to leave the country."

Maupertuis was solaced. "This act," he wrote a day or two after, "which is much more infamous here than in France, was done by the king's express order, with the great applause of all respectable people; and you could see persons coming in carriages from every direction to warm themselves by that fire. The same evening the king wrote me a charming letter, and sent me the ashes of that Diatribe as a cooling powder." The official paper of Berlin, in its next number, had the following: "Sunday, at noon, a horrible pamphlet, entitled, 'The Diatribe,' etc., was burned publicly in different places by the hand of the executioner. M. de Voltaire is said to be the author of it."

This paragraph was copied into the other gazettes of Europe as a personal item of much interest that could be inserted

without danger. Not one of them informed the public of the effect of this flaming advertisement: "Ten presses in Germany, in January, 1753, printing Akakia day and night!" "Six thousand copies of Akakia sold in Paris in one day," "thirty thousand" in a few weeks! For the moment, and within the court circle of Berlin, Maupertuis was a kind of victor in the controversy, and Voltaire was held to be "in the king's disgrace!" Frederic visited the president at his own Noah's ark, where he doubtless cast a gracious glance at the parrots, and, as we know, poured abundant oil upon the wounded self-love of their master.

The Christmas gayeties followed. On New Year's Day Voltaire sent the king a package containing what he termed a New Year's gift, the cross of his order and the key appertaining to his dignity of royal chamberlain, with a letter, all respect and devotion, resigning his office and announcing his intended return to France. The tears and solicitations of his family, he said, induced him to lay at the king's feet the distinctions and benefits with which he had been honored. Upon the outside of the parcel inclosing these trinkets, which he sealed himself, he wrote the well-known lines: —

"Je les reçus avec tendresse,
Je vous les rends avec douleur;
C'est ainsi qu'un amant, dans son extrême ardeur,
Rend le portrait de sa maîtresse."[1]

Secretary Collini, who looked on and saw the packet prepared and directed, relates what followed: —

"Young Francheville [son of his host] was charged to go and deliver this packet at the palace, and to give it to M. Fredersdorff, to whom Voltaire at the same time wrote a note, asking him to place the packet in the king's hands. This Fredersdorff was a kind of secretary to the monarch, who united in himself offices the most incongruous. He was at once secretary, steward, *valet de chambre*, master of the household, cup-bearer, and butler. The same day, in the afternoon, a carriage stopped before our door. It was Fredersdorff, who came from the king to bring back the cross of the order and the key of the chamberlain. There was a long conference between them. I was in the next room, and I gathered from some exclamations that it was only after a very animated discussion that Voltaire made up his mind to retain the presents which were now restored to him."

[1] I received them with tenderness, I give them back with pain. It is so that a lover, in his extreme ardor, gives back the portrait of his mistress.

Their return was in truth more embarrassing than agreeable. It increased the difficulty of his getting away without making of the King of Prussia an active enemy, who could render his peaceful settlement anywhere on the continent of Europe impossible. Politics were already converging towards the Seven Years' War, in which even Pennsylvania was to be involved within three years. What king, what emperor, would not be willing to oblige a possible ally by annoying or excluding a fugitive poet? The same evening, soon after Fredersdorff's departure, the restored chamberlain wrote to the king a letter, in which his embarrassment was expressed in the court jargon of the period: —

"M. Fredersdorff, who has been to console me in my disgrace, has given me hopes that your majesty will deign to hear in my favor the goodness of your character, and that you will repair by your benevolence, if it is possible, the opprobrium with which you have overwhelmed me. It is very certain that the unhappiness of having displeased you is not the least evil that I experience. But how am I to appear, — how live? I know not. I ought to be dead with grief. In this horrible condition, it is for your humanity to have pity on me. What do you wish should become of me? What do you wish me to do? I know not. I only know that you have attached me to yourself these sixteen years past. Dispose of a life which I have consecrated to you, and the end of which you have rendered so bitter. You are good, you are indulgent; I am the most unfortunate man in your dominions; command my destiny."

The next morning (January 2, 1753), the king wrote a friendly and even cordial reply, which has not been preserved. Voltaire responded in a similar spirit; but, without again sending back his cross and key, he persisted in asking the king to accept his resignation, and to permit him henceforward to be bound only by affection and respect. Toward the end of January, when the king returned to Potsdam, matters were so far restored that he invited Voltaire to resume his old quarters in the château. He did not go to Potsdam, alleging ill-health; and he really was unfit for even so short a journey. He took care, however, to notify Europe of the invitation through the gazettes. "We learn by several letters from Berlin that M. de Voltaire, gentleman-in-ordinary of the chamber to the King of France, having remitted to his Prussian majesty his order,

his chamberlain's key, and whatever was due to him of his pensions, his Prussian majesty has not only returned them all, but has signified his desire that M. de Voltaire should follow him to Potsdam, and occupy his usual rooms in the palace." Having secured the insertion of these lines in the newspapers, he remained at Berlin, assiduously preparing for his departure, and discussing plans with Collini for their escape. He longed for the return of spring that he might begin his journey, and about the first of March he asked leave of absence to visit Plombières, a French watering-place then in high favor, and situated at a safe distance from Berlin. No answer came. He was impatient; he now held Prussia, as he wrote to Madame Denis, "in horror;" he paid diligent court to the French ambassador, not allowing him to forget that he was gentleman-in-ordinary to the King of France. Collini gives us an amusing view of his life at this time, uncertain whether he was to depart with or without the king's consent. Depart he would; upon that point alone he was unalterably determined.

"As soon as he felt himself well enough to support the fatigues of a journey, he asked permission of the king to go and drink the waters of Plombières, which the doctors had advised for his erysipelas. He remained some time without receiving a positive answer, which made him very uneasy. On the last day of February he had a particular conversation with me. He told me he was preparing to leave the house of M. de Francheville, and had already informed the father that he could not keep his son in his service any longer. The reason he had given was that, intending to go to Plombières for his health, he was unwilling to take away one of the king's subjects, which might displease his majesty. 'My real motive,' he added, 'is that I do not wish near me this young man, who will be less one of my secretaries than an agent to keep Berlin informed of all my proceedings. You alone will accompany me.' He charged me at the same time with the duty of making all the expenditures necessary for a sort of household we were going to set up, for which he advanced me a suitable sum of money. Until then his expenses had been defrayed by the king. Thus I was employed at once in writing under his dictation, in copying his corrected works, and in providing for the needs of a household which was about to become wandering.

"March 5th, I was very busy. Voltaire had with him many books that belonged to the king's library; these he told me to find and return, which I did. Then I put his papers in order, and had his things

packed. That very day we left M. de Francheville's house, which was in the centre of Berlin, and we removed to one far from there, in the Stralau quarter. It belonged to a great merchant named Schweiger, and its situation made it a kind of country house. We lived eleven days in that solitude. Our little household consisted of the master, a female cook, a man-servant, and myself, treasurer and director of the troupe. Notwithstanding his distance from the city, he received some visits. The Countess of Bentinct, that illustrious and genial woman, fit to govern an empire, was firmly attached to him, and often came to comfort him. Dr. Coste was also one of his friends, and lavished upon him all the resources of his art; it was he who advised the waters of Plombières. But the permission to depart did not arrive, and these delays caused Voltaire the greatest anxiety. He dreaded some fatal event; he feared a resolution had been taken to prevent his leaving Brandenburg. This apprehension tormented him, and made him still more impatient to get away.

"I went sometimes to walk with him in a large garden belonging to the house. When he wanted to be alone, he would say to me, 'Now leave me to dream [*révasser*] a little.' That was his expression, and he would continue his walk. One evening, in this garden, after having talked together upon his situation, he asked me if I knew how to drive a wagon drawn by two horses. I reflected upon it a moment, and, as I knew that his ideas must not be at once contradicted, I replied in the affirmative. 'Listen,' said he to me. 'I have thought of a way to get out of this country. You can buy two horses. It will not, after that, be difficult to purchase a wagon. When we have horses it will not appear strange to make a provision of hay.' 'Very well, sir,' said I; 'what shall we do with a wagon, horses, and hay?' 'Why, this: We will fill the wagon with hay. In the middle of the hay we will put all our baggage. I will place myself, disguised, upon the hay, and give myself out for a Protestant pastor who is going to see one of his married daughters in the neighboring town. You will be my wagoner. We will follow the shortest road to the frontiers of Saxony, where we will sell wagon, horses, and hay; after that we will take the post for Leipsic.' He could not keep from laughing in communicating to me this project, and he accompanied his account with a thousand gay and curious reflections. I answered him that I would do what he wanted, and that I was disposed to give him all proofs of devotion that depended upon me; but that, not knowing German, I should not be able to reply to the questions which would be asked me. Besides, not knowing very well how to drive, I could not answer for not upsetting my pastor into some ditch, which would grieve me much. We finished by laughing together over the scheme. He

did not much count upon realizing it; but he loved to imagine means of leaving a country where he regarded himself as a prisoner. 'My friend,' said he to me, 'if permission to go does not come in a little while, I will know some way or other of leaving the island of Alcina.' Since they had burned his book, he feared more than ever princes and nobles, and vaunted unceasingly the pleasure of living free and far from them."

Toward the middle of March the king, not yet suspecting the reality of his poet's desire to leave him, made an ill-timed advance toward reconciliation. He dictated the following to his new secretary, the Abbé de Prades, and caused it to be sent to Voltaire as a note from the secretary. The abbé, a familiar friend of Voltaire, grateful to him for various services, — owing to him his settlement in Prussia, — could be supposed to write in this jocular strain: —

"The king has held his consistory, and in that consistory it has been discussed whether your offense was a mortal or a venial sin. In truth, all the doctors have recognized that it was very mortal, and confirmed such by lapses and relapses. But, nevertheless, in the plenitude of the grace of Beelzebub, which rests upon his majesty, he believes himself able to absolve you, if not wholly, at least in part. This would naturally be, in truth, in consequence of some act of contrition and imposed penance; but as, in the empire of Satan, much deference is paid to genius, I believe that, in consideration of your talents, faults can be pardoned which bring reproach upon your disposition. These are the words of the sovereign Pontiff, which I have recorded with care. It is rather a prophecy." [1]

Voltaire's reply to the abbé was far from being such as the king expected. It was written March 15th.

"Dear Abbé, — Your style did not appear to me agreeable. You are quite the secretary of state; but I notify you that I must embrace you before my departure. I shall not be able to kiss you, for my lips are too much swollen by my devil of a disease [erysipelas]. You will easily do without my kisses, but not, I pray you, without my warm and sincere friendship. I confess to you that I am in despair at leaving you and at leaving the king; but it is a thing indispensable. Consult with the dear marquis, with Fredersdorff, *pardieu*, with the king himself, how you can manage so that I may have the consolation of seeing him before my departure. I wish it absolutely; I wish to embrace with my two arms the abbé and the marquis. The marquis [D'Ar-

[1] 22 Œuvres de Frédéric, 307.

gens] will be no more kissed than you, nor the king either; but I shall be much moved. I am weak; I am a soft-hearted chicken. I shall behave absurdly: no matter; I wish once more to bid farewell to you two. If I do not throw myself at the feet of the king, the waters of Plombières will kill me. I await your response to leave this country as a fortunate or unfortunate man. Reckon upon me as long as you live."

For such a rejection of a jocular advance to be extremely disagreeable it was not necessary for the suitor to be a king. Frederic was acutely wounded by it. He dashed upon paper an outline of the reply which he wished to be drawn up in the king's name by the new secretary. The paper is still preserved in the archives of the Prussian court.

"That he can leave this service whenever he wishes; that he has no need to employ the pretext of the waters of Plombières, but that he will have the goodness, before setting out, to return to me the contract of his engagement, the key, the cross, and the volume of poems which I have confided to him; that I wish he and Koenig had attacked only my works; that I sacrifice them with good-will to those who desire to blacken the reputation of others; that I have not the folly and vanity of authors, and that the cabals of men of letters appear to me to be the last degree of baseness."

The Abbé de Prades put these ideas into form, and sent the letter to Voltaire March 16th. But such a *congé* would not answer the purposes of the deserter; for a king then had arms that could reach far beyond the boundaries of his own kingdom, as Voltaire was soon to know. Other correspondence followed; the king wrote in a friendlier tone, hinting that, if waters were necessary, there were excellent waters nearer than those of Plombières.

On the 18th of March, the king sent the required leave of absence, and an intimation to the invalid that he would be glad to see him at Potsdam before his departure. Without the loss of a moment, the traveling carriage was packed and the last preparations were made. On the same day Voltaire and his secretary went to Potsdam, arriving at seven in the evening, and occupied once more their familiar quarters in the palace. The next day, after dinner, the parades and other kingly duties being done, Voltaire and Frederic were closeted together in the king's office for the space of two hours.

These two men, apart from the difference in rank between them, were master and pupil, a relation that can be among the most amiable and tender which human beings know. Voltaire had awakened the intellect of the prince years before they began to correspond, and to him Frederic owed a great part of his mental culture. They had been like lovers together in this château of Potsdam; and, despite their differences, each had still for the other an unexpended balance of affection. Face to face once more in a familiar room, the old feelings revived. The king, as we may infer from his own letters, tried again to justify the support he had given Maupertuis in that precipitate iniquity of his toward a brother *savan*. "You ought to remember," the king wrote to Voltaire a year later, "that, when you came to take leave of me at Potsdam, I assured you that I was willing to forget all that had passed, provided you would give me your word to do nothing more against Maupertuis." This is all we really know of what passed between them, except that their friendship seemed to live again in all its warmth, and that the king expected his happy return as soon as he had finished with the waters of Plombières. It was only *a leave of absence*, let us remember, that Voltaire had asked and received, — not a dismissal from the king's service.

"Their interview," continues Collini, "lasted two hours; two months had passed since they had seen each other. When Voltaire reappeared, he had so satisfied an air, it was easy to judge that peace was restored. In fact, I learned from him that Frederic had entirely returned to confidence and friendship, and that Maupertuis himself had been in some sallies immolated to their reconciliation."

Six days Voltaire now passed at Potsdam, fêted and caressed by the king and court, supping every evening in the jovial and familiar old way. The king hoped the journey would be given up, but Voltaire, to whom these gay repasts were, as he styled them, "suppers of Damocles," only watched a favorable moment for taking leave. On the 26th of March, the king being about to start upon his tour of the posts in Silesia, he was holding the last parade of his regiment at nine o'clock in the morning. It was now or never with the deserter. He went to the parade ground. "Here, sire, is M. de Voltaire," said an officer, "who comes to receive your majesty's orders."

The king turned toward him, and said, "Very well, M. de Voltaire, you absolutely wish, then, to set out?" To which the traveler replied, "Sire, indispensable affairs, and, above all, my health, oblige me to do so." The king said, "Monsieur, I wish you a good journey."[1] And so they parted, never to meet again.

From the parade ground he hurried back to the château, where everything was in readiness for instant departure. Dreading some after-thought of the king that might yet frustrate or detain him, he would not stop even to take leave of his comrades, with whom he had lived familiarly and cordially. He had written a few lines of school-boy farewell to them, although he addressed the note to the Marquis d'Argens: —

"Brother, I bid you good-by; I separate from you with regret. Your brother conjures you, as he sets out, to repel the assaults of the demon, who may desire to do during my absence what he has not been able to accomplish while we lived together: he has not been able to sow discord between us. I hope that, with the grace of the Lord, brother Gaillard [Abbé de Prades] will not let it come near his field. I recommend myself to your prayers and to his. Raise your hearts to God, my dear brothers, and shut your ears to the discourses of men. Live united, and always love your brother."

He had now done with the Prussian court. Let Collini relate his departure.

"We passed [records the secretary] part of the night of the 23d of March together. He gave me several bags of money, charged me to go the next day to Berlin, accompanied by a servant, and carry them to a banker, and get for him letters of credit. I executed that commission, and returned to Potsdam on the morning of the 25th. It was on the next day that Voltaire took leave of the king, at an early hour, and got immediately afterwards into the traveling carriage which I had caused to be prepared for him, and started on the road to Leipsic. Leaving Potsdam at nine in the morning of the 26th of March, 1753, we reached Leipsic (ninety-two miles distant) at six in the evening of the 27th. . . . . The vehicle in which we made the journey was his own; it was a traveling carriage, large, commodious, well hung, abundantly furnished with pockets and compartments. The latter were filled with two portmanteaus, and the former with valises. Upon the front seat outside were placed two

[1] 2 Souvenirs de Vingt Ans de Séjour à Berlin, par D. Thiebault, 348.

servants, of whom one was from Potsdam and served as a copyist. Four post-horses, and sometimes six, according to the nature of the roads, were harnessed to the carriage. These details are nothing in themselves, but they serve to show the manner of traveling of a man of letters, who had known how to create for himself a fortune equal to his reputation. Voltaire and I occupied the interior of the carriage with two or three portfolios, which contained the manuscripts he most valued, and a cash-box, wherein were his gold, his letters of exchange, and his most precious effects. It was in this style that we journeyed through Germany. Accordingly, at every post-house and inn we were accosted and received at the gate with all the respect that is shown to opulence. Here it was M. the *Baron* de Voltaire; there, M. the *Count* or M. the *Chamberlain;* and nearly everywhere it was *his Excellency* who arrived. I still have some bills of landlords headed, For *his Excellency* M. *the Count de Voltaire*, with secretary and suite. All these scenes amused the philosopher, who despised those titles upon which vanity is pleased to nourish itself, and we laughed at them together heartily. Nor was it from vanity that he traveled in this manner. Already old and sickly, he loved and has always loved the conveniences of life. He was very rich, and made a noble use of his fortune. Those who have wished to make Voltaire pass for a miser knew him very little. He had with regard to money the same principle as for time: it was necessary, according to him, *to economize in order to be liberal.*"

On reaching Leipsic, which is about seven miles from the Prussian frontier, he did not go to an inn, but to a suite of rooms which he had caused to be hired for him in advance. He was a Prussian no more, and he meant to remain several days at Leipsic, as if to enjoy his new freedom. Already that city was one of the chief book marts of the world; what more natural than that the most prolific and popular author of the day should have some business to detain him there? Several presses at Leipsic were even then printing editions of the "Diatribe of Doctor Akakia, Physician to the Pope," so brilliantly advertised by a king not popular in Saxony. The appetite for Akakia seemed insatiable; and the author of the work could say with some truth that he had amused Europe at the expense of the president of the Berlin Academy. "When I am attacked," he wrote to Formey, just before leaving, "I defend myself like a devil; but I am a good devil, and I end by laughing."

CHAPTER X.

PARTING SHOTS AT MAUPERTUIS.

COLLINI speaks of two or three portfolios in the commodious traveling carriage, containing manuscripts which the author particularly valued. Among these was a continuation of the "Diatribe of Doctor Akakia," written soon after the public burning in the streets of Berlin, on the day before Christmas. The new part of Akakia had, as there is reason to believe, been read to a few of the faithful in Berlin; and some inkling of the same had, as usual, escaped the chosen circle, and reached the ears both of the king and the president. Hence the promise exacted by Frederic that Voltaire would let Maupertuis alone; in other words, not add a supplement to the Diatribe.

This supplement was even more boisterously comic than the part already published. The Diatribe concluded, as the reader may remember, with some salutary advice given by the Inquisition to the young candidate, who had presumed to write under the name of an illustrious president. The new part began by saying that this benign treatment had produced an effect contrary to that expected by the faculty, as often happened. The bile of the native of St. Malo being exalted by it still more than his soul, he had pitilessly caused the prescription of the doctor to be *burned*, and the malady grew worse. He persisted in making experiments, and, to that end, held the Memorable Session, of which Doctor Akakia proceeds to render a faithful account. Here was another opportunity to *repeat* the familiar absurdities, with burlesque variations of the most mirth-provoking character. The president from his lofty chair opens the session by pronouncing the eulogy of a member who had recently *ripened*, that is, died, because the precaution had not been taken to stop his pores, and preserve him like a fresh egg, according to the new method. The experiments followed. Two doctors produced each a patient covered with pitch, and

two surgeons pierced their arms and legs with long needles. At once, the patients, who before could hardly move, began to run and roar with all their might; and the secretary entered the fact upon the records. Next, the apothecary drew near with a large vessel of laudanum, and placed it upon a volume written by the president, in order to double its effect, and gave a dose of it to a vigorous young man. Then, behold, to the great astonishment of every one present, he fell asleep, and in his sleep he had a happy dream, which alarmed the ladies who had come to this solemnity; and the nature of the soul was perfectly known, as Monsieur the President had very well divined. After several more experiments, the perpetual secretary concluded the session by a eulogy of the president, whose *monade* he exalted to the clouds, or, at least, to the fogs. Finally, a throne was constructed for the president, composed of bladders, from which he set out the next day for the moon.

Nor was this the end of it. A second supplement was written, in which there was a fourth ludicrous repetition of the old points. It began thus: "The native of St. Malo did not go to the moon, as was believed; he contented himself with barking at it. The good Doctor Akakia, seeing that the disease grew worse, thought, with some of his colleagues, to sweeten the acridity of the humors by reconciling the president with the Helvetian doctor, who had so much displeased him by showing him his *measure*." The treaty of peace follows, in nineteen articles, of such exquisite fun that, if Maupertuis had not been just the Maupertuis he was, he must have given in, and joined the rest of Europe in the roars of laughter which it elicited.

With these supplements in his portfolio, Voltaire found himself in Leipsic, on the 27th of March. He was much occupied at this period with refuting La Beaumelle, and was preparing to publish further evidence of the man's impudent, unconscious depravity. When he had passed a week at Leipsic, ever busy with this matter, which was to him, both as author and as man, of the most absorbing interest, he received a letter from Maupertuis, which had important results, even to the altering of his whole future: —

[Berlin, April 3, 1753.] "The gazettes say that you are detained, sick, at Leipsic; private information assures me that you are stopping there only to have new libels printed. For my part, I wish to give you certain information of my condition and of my intentions.

"I have never done anything against you, never written anything, never said anything. I have even found it unworthy of me to reply one word to all the impertinences which you have hitherto spread abroad; and I have preferred to ignore stories concerning M. de la Beaumelle, the disavowal of which I have in writing from himself, and a hundred other falsehoods which you have made public with the design to color your conduct toward me, rather than continue a contest so indecent. The justice which the king has done me against your writings, my sickness, and the slight value I attach to my works have hitherto combined to justify my indolence.

"But if it is true that your intention is to attack me again, and to attack me, as you have already done, by personalities, I declare to you that, instead of replying to you by writings, my health is sufficiently good to find you wherever you may be, and to wreak upon you vengeance the most complete.

"Render thanks to the respect and obedience which have hitherto held back my arm, and which have saved you from the most doleful *adventure* you have ever had."

The last sentence of this letter alluded to humiliating events in the early life of Voltaire, of which his enemies were apt to remind him, but seldom with impunity. A new edition of Doctor Akakia speedily appeared, with the supplements, and with supplements added to the supplements, and appendages to them, all of the most diverting character. The gentle Akakia published part of the president's angry letter; but, instead of its last sentence, he substituted the single word "Tremble!" The reply of Doctor Akakia followed: —

[Leipsic, April 10, 1753.] "Mr. President, — I have received the letter with which you honor me. You inform me that you are in good health, that your strength is entirely restored, and you threaten to come and assassinate me if I publish the letter of La Beaumelle. What ingratitude towards your poor Doctor Akakia! You are not content with ordering us not to pay the doctor; you wish to kill him! This procedure does not savor of a president of an Academy, nor of a good Christian, such as you are. I compliment you upon your good health; but I have not as much strength as you. I have been in bed fifteen days, and I beg you to defer the little experiment in physics which you wish to make. You desire, perhaps, to dissect me? But consider that I am not a giant of the southern hemisphere, and that my brain is so small that the examination of its fibre will not give you any notion of the soul. Besides, if you kill me, have the goodness to

remember that M. de la Beaumelle has promised to pursue me even to hell. He will not fail to go in quest of me there. Although the hole which is to be dug by your order to the centre of the earth, and which must lead straight to hell, is not yet begun, there are other means of going thither; and it will come to pass that I shall be abused in the other world, as you have persecuted me in this. Are you willing, monsieur, to carry animosity so far?

"Have the goodness to bear with me a little further. Little as you may wish to exalt your soul in order clearly to discern the future, you will perceive that, if you come to assassinate me at Leipsic, where you are not more beloved than elsewhere, and where your letter is deposited in evidence, you run some risk of being hanged; which would too much advance the moment of your maturity, and would not be becoming the president of an Academy. I advise you, before doing so, to have the letter of La Beaumelle declared, in one of your sessions, a forgery intended to diminish your glory; after which, it will be more permitted to you, perhaps, to kill me as a disturber of your self-love.

"For the rest, I am still very weak, and I should only be able to throw at your head my syringe and other objects of my bed-chamber; but as soon as I shall have gained a little strength, I shall have my pistols loaded *cum pulvere pyrio*,[1] and by multiplying the mass by the square of the rapidity, until the action and you will be reduced to zero, I shall put some lead into your brain. It appears to have need of it.

"It will be sad for you that the Germans, whom you have so much reviled, invented gunpowder, as you ought to lament that they invented printing. Adieu, my dear president.

"P. S. As there are from fifty to sixty people here who have taken the liberty to poke fun at you prodigiously, they ask on what day you intend to assassinate them."

The good doctor, in terror, appealed for protection to the great and famous university: —

"Doctor Akakia, having fled to the university of Leipsic, where he has sought an asylum against the hostile attempts of a Laplander, native of St. Malo, who absolutely designs to come and assassinate him in the arms of the said university, urgently entreats messieurs the doctors and scholars to arm themselves against this barbarian with their inkhorns and penknives. He addresses himself particularly to his brother physicians. He hopes that they will relieve the said savage, as soon as he shall appear, of all his peccant humors, and that they will preserve by their skill what may remain of reason to this

[1] Gunpowder.

cruel Laplander, and of life to their brother, the good Akakia, who commends himself to their care. He entreats messieurs the apothecaries not to forget him on this occasion."

Besides this, he drew up an advertisement, in the name of the university, warning the public to be on their guard: —

"A Certain Person having written a letter to an inhabitant of Leipsic, in which he threatens the said inhabitant with assassination, and assassination being evidently contrary to the privileges of the fair, we pray all and each to give information of the said Certain Person when he shall present himself at the gates of Leipsic. He is a philosopher, who walks in a manner composed of the air distracted and the air precipitate; the eye round and small, and the peruke the same; the nose flattened, the physiognomy bad; having the countenance full, and a mind full of himself; always carrying a scalpel in his pocket, with which to dissect people of high stature. Whoever shall give information of him shall have a reward of a thousand ducats in the funds of the Latin city which the aforesaid Certain Person is having built, or from the first comet of gold or diamond, which is to fall immediately upon the earth, according to the predictions of the said philosopher and assassin."

Finally, he sent, or pretended to send, all these documents to the secretary of the Berlin Academy, with the letter subjoined: —

"Monsieur le Secrétaire Eternel, — I send you the sentence of death which the president has pronounced against me, with my appeal to the public, and the testimonials of protection which all the doctors and all the apothecaries of Leipsic have given me. You see that the president does not limit himself to experiments in the southern hemisphere, and that he absolutely wishes in the northern to separate my soul from my body. It is the first time that a president has desired to kill one of his counselors. Is that the principle of the least action? What a terrible man is this president! Here he declares a man a forger, there he assassinates; and he proves the existence of God by a plus b divided by z. Truly his parallel has never been seen. I have made, monsieur, one little reflection: it is that when the president shall have killed, dissected, and buried me it will be necessary to pronounce my eulogium at the Academy, according to the laudable custom. If it is he who undertakes it, he will be not a little embarrassed. We know that he was so with that of the late Marshall Schmettau, to whom he had given some pain in his life-time. If it is you, monsieur, who pronounce my funeral oration, you will be quite

as much hindered as another. You are a priest, and I am a layman; you are a Calvinist, and I am a Papist; you are an author, and I am one also; you are in good health, and I am a physician. Therefore, monsieur, in order to avoid the funeral oration, and to put every one at his ease, permit me to die by the cruel hand of the president, and scratch me from the number of your elect. You must feel also that, being condemned to death by his decree, I should be first degraded. Erase me, then, monsieur, from your list; put me with the forger Koenig, who had the misfortune to be in the right. I patiently await death with that criminal.

. . . . 'Pariterque jacentes
Ignovere diis.'

(Phars. ii. 93.)

"I am, metaphysically, monsieur, your very humble and very obedient servant, AKAKIA.

Thus the Diatribe ended, making altogether a pamphlet of more than fifty pages. The burlesque letters raised its popularity to the highest point, and remained part of the common stock of fun available for journalism during the rest of that century. They were translated into many languages; and parts of them may be found afloat in periodicals as late as 1780. The author was detained nearly a month at Leipsic; but the president of the Berlin Academy did not improve the chance to come and execute his threat. He had his revenge; nor was it long delayed; but it was wreaked by a more powerful hand than his own.

During this stay at Leipsic, as during much of this year, Voltaire was engaged in defending his "Louis XIV." against the notes of La Beaumelle. This task he performed, not in the light manner of Akakia, nor in the tone of his replies to Desfontaines, but seriously, earnestly, and at length. "We have always thought," he once remarked, "that it is not necessary to reply to critics when the point is merely one of taste. You find 'La Henriade' bad; compose a better one. 'Zaïre,' 'Mérope,' 'Mahomet,' 'Tancrède,' appear ridiculous to you; I do not object. As to history, it is another thing. The author accused of error in a date, a fact, is bound either to correct it if he is wrong, or prove it if he is right. It is permitted to weary the public; it is not permitted to deceive it." La Beaumelle's possession of the letters of Madame Maintenon had given him misleading glimpses behind the scenes; Voltaire, in his refuta-

tion, shows that he had lived behind the scenes, and conversed familiarly with actors in that gorgeous drama. To break down the testimony of Cardinal de Fleury, which Voltaire had frequently cited, the critic endeavored to prove that the cardinal did not like Voltaire. "I have nowhere said that he liked me," was his reply. Nevertheless, it was the cardinal from whom he had derived the fact that M. de Bâville, intendant of Languedoc, was the prime instigator of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. "I asked the cardinal if Louis XIV. had been well grounded in his religion, for which he showed so great zeal. He replied to me in these self-same words: 'He had the faith of a charcoal-burner.'"

La Beaumelle had taunted the author of the "Age of Louis XIV." with his wealth, "as if that pretended wealth had been gained at his expense." In reply to this, he drew a picture of poor authors groveling every day before a rich ignoramus, incensing him from the lower end of his table, and abasing themselves before him for self-abasement's sake. "They are not jealous of *him;* they think him of a nature superior to their own. But let a man of letters be elevated above them by fortune and places, and even those who have received benefits from his hands carry their envy of him even to fury. Virgil in easy circumstances was calumniated by Mevius."

In the "Pucelle," upon which he had been occasionally working this year, he did not forget the outrage of which he had been the victim at the hands of this man. La Beaumelle figures, in the eighteenth canto, as one of the chain gang going to the galleys, along with a priest who confessed and plundered the dying, and with another priest who confessed and betrayed young nuns.

"Pour le dernier de la noble sequelle,
C'est mon soutien, c'est mon cher La Beaumelle.
De dix gredins qui m'ont vendu leur voix,
C'est le plus bas, mais c'est le plus fidèle;
Esprit distrait, on prétend que parfois,
Tout occupé de ses œuvres chrétiennes,
Il prend d'autrui les poches pour les siennes."[1]

[1] For the last of the noble gang, it is my support, my dear La Beaumelle. Of ten blackguards who have sold me their votes, he is the lowest, but the most faithful; a spirit distraught, they say, that sometimes, all absorbed in his Christian works, takes other people's pockets for his own. (La Pucelle, canto 18, line 182.)

Poets then appended abundant notes to their works. Voltaire, following Pope's example in the "Dunciad," after he had pierced an enemy in his text, left him impaled and labeled in his notes. In the note on this passage, besides giving an outline of La Beaumelle's career, brief and blasting, he excuses his mention of so many insignificant libelers. Some friends, he remarks, have advised him to pay no attention to such people, but let them rail on. "We do not think so," he replies; "we believe that it is necessary to punish ragamuffins when they are insolent and rascally, and especially when they are tedious. Such details, which are but too true, ought to be published, like handbills on the street corners describing malefactors."

He returns to this idea many times. Elsewhere he says, "What happens when such a work [as La Beaumelle's edition of "Louis XIV."] appears? Young countrymen, young foreigners, ask for the 'Age of Louis XIV.' at a bookseller's. The bookseller inquires if they wish the edition with learned notes. The buyer replies that he wishes by all means the work complete. The edition of La Beaumelle is handed to him. The givers of advice say to you, 'Despise that infamy; the author is not worth mention.' Pleasant advice, truly! It is the same as saying that imposture must be allowed to triumph. No; it must be made known."[1]

This traveler did well to bring with him for his tour through Germany a copyist and a valet, as well as a secretary; for we perceive that he had abundant work for all of them. At Leipsic he found awaiting him the mass of his effects sent from Potsdam and Berlin by wagon; and, while he was writing letters, composing Akakia, reading proof, and accumulating evidence of his historical correctness, his servants were packing books in cases, and his secretary was putting his papers in order. Among his books was a volume of the King of Prussia's poems, given him by the king, of which only a very small number of copies had been printed for distribution among the king's most trusted friends. These poems, as the reader has seen, owed many a bright touch and happy couplet to the hand of the royal poet's master. In some of these poems, Frederic had written of contemporaries with the free-

[1] Les Honnêtetés Littéraires. 36 Œuvres, 238.

dom of a man who has an army at his orders. The volume was now packed, with a quantity of other books, in a large case, and the whole mass of effects were given in charge to a merchant of Leipsic, who agreed to forward them to Strasbourg, the nearest French city. His niece, Madame Denis, was coming from Paris to Strasbourg to meet him, and there they would consult as to their future movements.

The author's presence in Leipsic was an event of much note. He was not wanting to the occasion. Busy as he was, he found time to pay his respects to the learned professors of the University, and to visit the beautiful and famous gardens of the neighborhood. After a stay of twenty-three days, the commodious traveling carriage was again brought round, and M. le Comte de Voltaire, with secretary and suite, resumed his journey.

CHAPTER XI.

A HAPPY MONTH AT GOTHA.

GOTHA, the capital of the Duchy of Saxe-Gotha, about a hundred miles southwest of Leipsic, was his next halting-place. Here he alighted at an inn; but he had scarcely done so when an invitation came from the reigning duke and duchess to take up his abode at their château, near by. He had been in correspondence with the Duchess of Saxe-Gotha when he was studying history with Madame du Châtelet at Cirey, and had even sent her a manuscript of part of his General History, which she still possessed. He accepted the invitation, and was at once established in the château, with "his secretary and suite."

A month of enchantment followed. The ducal palace, now so renowned for its galleries, its collections, its library of two hundred thousand volumes, its precious and unique manuscripts, was already one of the most richly provided and famous residences of Germany. The reigning family was related to that of Weimar, a day's ride distant, a family forever interesting and familiar to the educated portion of our race through Goethe's long connection with it. The Duchess of Saxe-Gotha reminds us of Goethe's Duchess of Weimar, and she received Voltaire as gracious ladies do receive men who have instructed them. A woman never wields such power and fascination as when she is at the head of a great establishment like this, and is worthy to be at the head of it. She is then the illustrious housekeeper, and all the nobler attributes both of the woman and the princess have free scope. The duchess was in the prime of life, forty-three years of age, and she had gathered about her a little court of free and congenial spirits. What readings! what suppers! what pastimes! Never was a poet more caressed; and he, on his part, opened all his portfolios, and read the choicest of their contents. The poem on "Natural

Religion," written in Prussia, he read to the evening circle with such success as we can imagine. With greater applause he read new cantos of "La Pucelle." History was much spoken of between Voltaire and the duchess, particularly the "Age of Louis XIV." and the pirate edition of the same by La Beaumelle, whose escapade at Gotha with the thieving governess was fresh in every one's recollection. While speaking of history, she lamented that there was no popular account of the German empire since Charlemagne, a period during which her own ancestors had been conspicuous. Her son, heir to a duchy that cast a vote in the imperial congress, was growing up in ignorance of the history of the empire of which he was to be a part.

Like a true knight, Voltaire engaged to produce such a work for her boy's convenience and her own; and, at once, with that impetuosity of which Collini has spoken, he began his "Annals of the Empire since Charlemagne," well styled by Collini "the most methodical and the most painful of all of his works." The château contained treasures of information on this subject. Collini and the copyist knew no rest. During a great part of the thirty-five days of his stay at Gotha, Voltaire kept them busy enough, copying, searching, and writing under his dictation. Few knights in the ages of chivalry ever redeemed a vow with so much patient toil as this author expended upon these Annals, a work from which he could derive neither glory nor profit: a thousand printed pages of fact and outline, mere dates, names and events, a catalogue of crimes, foibles, and misfortunes, with scarcely any of those details upon which the interest of the reader so much depends. Much of it was the kind of "history" supposed to be suited to the young, as bones and skeletons are useful to medical students. But, catalogue as it is, it was done by Voltaire, and there is hardly a page wherein there is not a trace of the intelligent and humane mind. Occasionally there is a passage, and even a chapter, of the true Voltaire. At the end of the work, mindful of a boy's infirmity, he not only gives lists of all the emperors, popes, and electors of the nine centuries which he had traversed, but summarizes each century in rhyme, to assist the memory. This is the rhyme of the ninth century: —

NEUVIÈME SIÈCLE.

"Charlemagne en huit cent renouvelle l'Empire,
Fait couronner son fils; en quatorze il expire.
Louis, en trente-trois par des prêtres jugé,
D'un sac de pénitent dans Soissons est chargé:
Rétabli, toujours faible, il expire en quarante.
Lothaire est moine à Prum, cinq ans après cinquante.
On perd après vingt ans le second des Louis:
Le Chauve lui succède, et meurt au Mont-Cenis.
Le Bègue, fils du Chauve, a l'Empire une année.
Le Gros, soumis au pape, ô dure destinée!
En l'an quatre-vingt-sept dans Trebur déposé,
Cède au bâtard Arnoul son trône méprisé.
Arnoul, sacré dans Rome ainsi qu'en Lombardie,
Finit avec le siècle en quittant l'Italie."

Each century has its summary, ending with the eighteenth, still incomplete: —

DIX-HUITIÈME SIÈCLE.

"Léopold, délivré du fer des Ottomans,
Expire en sept cent cinq; et Joseph l'an onzième.
Charles six en quarante; et le sang des Lorrains
S'unit au sang d'Autriche, au trône des Germains."

The Duchess of Saxe-Gotha, in tempting him to undertake this monotonous labor, rendered him a service, since it was a kind of work which he could do in such troublous times as were before him. It could amuse an anxious and quiet an excited mind. During all the rest of this year, and part of the next, he had these Annals to fall back upon when he could do little else, — an agreeable resource, too, which led him to several pleasant places, and introduced him to many learned men. It was a task in which he could be constantly aided by others, and which kept a cheerful bustle of work around him.

Many mementos of this visit occur in his works, and some adorned his abode to the end of his days. The collection of coins and medals in the château was, even then, one of the finest in Germany, and the duchess gave him some duplicates for his cabinet. Among the little poems which he addressed to her was one written on her recovery from an indisposition soon after: —

A MADAME LA DUCHESSE DE SAXE-GOTHA.

" Grand Dieu, qui rarement fais naître parmi nous
De graces, de vertus, cet heureux assemblage,
Quand ce chef-d'œuvre est fait, sois un peu plus jaloux
De conserver un tel ouvrage :
Fais naître en sa faveur un éternel printemps ;
Etends dans l'avenir ses belles destinées,
Et raccourcis les jours des sots et des méchants
Pour ajouter à ses années." [1]

The most delightful visits come to an end. May 25th, the poet bade farewell to the duchess and her court, and the great carriage, with heavier portfolios and more books than before, rumbled again along the German roads toward Frankfort-on-the-Main, more than a hundred miles further on the way to Strasbourg. Other princes invited him, and he halted for a night or two to visit them. Collini relates an amusing incident of this part of their journey. They left the château of the Landgrave of Hesse, at Wabern, on the 30th of May, in the morning, and reached Marbourg the same evening.

" The next day [says Collini], we had scarcely gone a league when Voltaire ordered the postilion to stop. He took snuff, and could not find, either in his pockets or in the carriage, the gold snuff-box which he ordinarily used. He did not show, on this occasion, the uneasiness which would have agitated a man over-fond of money; the box, nevertheless, was of great value. We held counsel upon the spot, without leaving the carriage. Voltaire believed he had left this snuff-box in the post-house at Marbourg. To send a servant or the postilion, on horseback, to seek for it was to run the risk of never seeing it again. I offer myself to make the journey on foot; he accepts, and I am off like an arrow. I arrive out of breath; I enter the post-house; everything is quiet there. I mount, without being seen, to the room in which Voltaire had slept, which was open. Nothing on the commode, nothing on the tables or on the bed. Beside this last piece of furniture was a night-table, covered by a fold of the curtain; I raise it, and I perceive the snuff-box. To possess myself of it, to descend the stairs, and to leave the house is but the work of a moment. I run to rejoin the carriage, as happy as Jason after the conquest of the golden fleece. This trinket, of great value, was one of

[1] Great God, who rarely causest to be born among us this happy union of graces and virtues, be a little more jealous to preserve such a work: create for her an eternal spring; extend into the future her beautiful destiny; and cut short the days of the foolish and the wicked in order to add to her years.

those gifts that princes lavished upon Voltaire as testimonials of their esteem; it was doubly precious. My illustrious traveling companion received it with pleasure, but also with the moderation of disinterestedness. He appeared to me more affected by the trouble that I had taken than happy to recover his snuff-box."

Continuing their journey, stopping only to visit the salt springs of Friedeberg, they reached Frankfort the same evening, May 31st, about eight o'clock. He took lodgings for the night at the Golden Lion inn, intending to resume his journey homeward early the next morning. He might well have planned to remain a while in this free city, not yet annexed to Prussia. Here was the ancient Council House in which the emperors of Germany were elected, and it contained portraits of them and other objects of historic interest, worthy the notice of an author engaged upon the "Annals of the Empire." The mighty Charlemagne had been in the city, and a spot whereon he once had stood was marked by an edifice which the boy Goethe could not pass without reverentially saluting. That wondrous boy was then nearly four years of age. Perhaps, already, he had thrown his mother's crockery out of the window; perhaps witnessed the performance of those immortal puppets that affected him so deeply. He had no recollection in after-life of this visit of Voltaire to his native place, the noise of which filled the world. But his father never forgot it, and often used the incidents about to be related to warn his son against accepting the favor of princes.

CHAPTER XII.

ARREST AND DETENTION AT FRANKFORT.

When Voltaire awoke at the Golden Lion on the 1st of June, 1753, more than two months had passed since he had taken leave of the King of Prussia on the parade ground at Potsdam. He had traveled leisurely in the pleasant spring weather, through some territories in which the influence of Frederic was not greatly inferior to that of a sovereign over tributary princes; but, so far as he yet knew, the king had taken no cognizance of his proceedings at Leipsic.

All Germany was laughing at Maupertuis; even the king's own sisters, and every member of his court who had any sense of the ludicrous. The Berlin Academy, too, so dear to the king, had its share of ridicule. And here was the author of the Diatribe traversing Germany triumphant, entertained and fêted by princesses. But during this long and brilliant progress a trap had been set for the culprit on the road by which he meant to reach Strasbourg. He was at length *in* the trap. He was caged in the Golden Lion; and, as he was getting ready for an early start that morning, his captors were coming to seize him.

The wrath of the king was violent against him in those early days of April, when the supplements to Akakia were coming from Leipsic, a city near his territories, but not of his inclining. A few hours must have made it plain that the fugitive was gone never to return. His retreat had been artfully managed; but he was gone, bag and baggage, and had even concealed the direction of his ulterior flight. The world-famous friendship between a great king and a great author was broken; Frederic had lost Voltaire, whom he had won only after a passionate, assiduous courtship of years. From his safe halting place of Leipsic he seemed to be hurling back defiance at the king. First may have come the ludicrous reply

to Maupertuis's threatening letter; then, probably, the advertisement warning the public against a certain philosopher and assassin, which Collini assures us was actually inserted in a Leipsic gazette; and at last the completed Diatribe, with all the supplements and correspondence, a budget of irresistible fun.

We have the means of knowing precisely how the king felt when this budget greeted him, upon his return from his tour in Silesia. His sister of Bayreuth, hearing of Voltaire's departure, wrote to the king asking an explanation of an event so much spoken of. His reply, dated April 12th, contained this passage: —

"You ask news of Voltaire; here is the truth of his story. He has behaved like the greatest scoundrel in the universe. He began with endeavoring to embroil everybody by lies and infamous calumnies, at which he did not blush; then he set himself to writing libels against Maupertuis, and he takes the part of Koenig, whom he hates[1] as much as he does Maupertuis, to chagrin the president, to render him ridiculous, and to get the presidency of our Academy: all this, with a number of intrigues, which I pass over, and in which his baseness, his wickedness, and his duplicity were manifest. See him printing his Akakia here in Potsdam by abusing a permission I gave him to print the 'Defense of Lord Bolingbroke.' I discover it; I have the edition seized, throw it into the fire, and sternly forbid him to have that libel printed anywhere else. I scarcely get to Berlin, when Akakia appears there, and is sold there; upon which I cause it to be burned by the hands of the executioner. Voltaire, so far from pausing at this, doubles and triples the dose, writing against every one. I had my part in this business, and I was lenient enough in permitting him to take his departure. At present, he is at Leipsic, where he distills new poisons, and where he pretends to be sick in order to correct a terrible work which he composes there. You see, then, that, far from wishing ever to see that wretch again, there is nothing left except to break entirely with him. If you permit me to give you my opinion freely, my dear sister, I should not be sorry for him to go to Bayreuth; for, with your consent, I would send some one there to ask him for the key and cross, which he still has, and, above all, for an edition of my verses, which he has sent to Frankfort-on-the-Main, and which I am utterly unwilling to leave in his possession, seeing the bad

[1] A mistake. Voltaire was on the friendliest terms with Koenig, as his letters of these months abundantly attest. His letters to Koenig are noticeably long and cordial.

use he is capable of making of it. As to yourself, my dear sister, I advise you not to write to him with your own hand; I was caught in that way. He is the most treacherous rascal there is in the universe. You will be astonished at all the base, deceitful, and wicked things he has done here. Men are broken upon the wheel who deserve it less than he."[1]

This was extreme for a philosopher. The sister of the angry monarch, in her reply, April 24th, sought to appease her "dearest brother:" —

"I have seen to-day a letter from Voltaire. He is going to Gotha, where his niece will join him. I doubt if he will come here. He sends word, however, that he will write again from Gotha. Perhaps he intends to establish himself there with his niece, which I shall try to prevent. The letters which he has written to his friends at this place (letters written in confidence, and which have been shown to me only after urgent solicitation) are very respectful towards you. He gives you the just title of great man. He complains of the preference which you gave to Maupertuis, and the prejudice which you have against him. He jests very piquantly upon the president, and I confess to you, my dear brother, that I was not able to keep from laughing while reading the piece; for it is so comically turned that a reader can scarcely keep his countenance. I shall not fail to notify you of anything I may learn about him."

The king would not be appeased. He replied promptly, April 29th:—

"Do not believe that I have told you the hundredth part of Voltaire's rascalities, of which there are enough to make a collection as large as a volume of Bayle. It is a pity indeed that the great talents of that man should be tarnished by the blackest and most perfidious soul, which embitters and spoils his whole existence."

Such were the feelings of this king toward the author of Akakia. His conduct was in accordance therewith, — violent, precipitate, and unjust. He had a pen, which Voltaire had taught him how to use; he had a printing-office at his command; and it would not have been difficult to reverse the system of Akakia, and set off the best things in Maupertuis's works against the absurdities used in the Diatribe. Frederic had entered the arena as *writer*, volunteering a defense of his president with the pen alone. Voltaire accepted the challenge, drew his pen once more, and soon had the presi-

[1] 27 Œuvres de Frédéric, 226.

dent prostrate on the sand, kicking the air, amid the merriment of the spectators. Then Frederic sprang to his feet, resumed the monarch, and ordered up some of those hundred and fifty thousand mustachios of whom his victor spoke. In other words, he went to his cabinet, touched his bell for Fredersdorff, and arranged to put upon Voltaire a gross public affront.

He had been led to suppose that the traveler intended to make some stay at Frankfort-on-the-Main, a free city, three hundred miles from Berlin, but dependent upon Frederic's forbearance for the semblance of "freedom" which it then enjoyed. At Leipsic Voltaire was comparatively safe; at Frankfort there was nothing that dared oppose the King of Prussia so long as he gave the magistracy an available pretext. At Frankfort the king kept a Resident, at two hundred thalers a year; and the incumbent was then a punctilious, unpliant man, named Freytag, — a dull, fussy, literal gentleman, who would obey an order with the exactness of an old sergeant-major, provided nothing was left to his discretion. To set such a person rummaging among the manuscripts of a man of letters was like sending a trained bear up a tree to bring down two eggs of a certain shade from a robin's nest. Suppose there should happen to be three such eggs, or only one; then what? If the parent bird should be so far lost to decency as to fly at a good bear's eyes, what then would an all-gracious sovereign lord be pleased to command?

April 11, 1753, Frederic, King of Prussia, caused Fredersdorff to write an order to Freytag, of which the following is a translation: —

"His majesty, our gracious master, makes known by the present to his Resident and Counselor of War, Von Freytag, that one De Voltaire will pass at a very early day through Frankfort-on-the-Main. The good pleasure of his majesty is that the Resident shall repair to his lodgings, accompanied by the aulic counselor living there, and demand of Voltaire, in his majesty's name, the chamberlain's key, as well as the cross and ribbon of the order of merit; and as Voltaire addressed to Frankfort his packets and packages on leaving Potsdam, among which will be found many letters and writings in his majesty's own hand, the said packets and packages, as well as the cases which he shall have with him, are to be opened in your presence, and every-

thing in the said handwriting is to be seized; also a book specified in the note herein inclosed. But as Voltaire is very cunning, you are to take, both of you, all the precautions to prevent his concealing or removing anything. After everything shall have been well examined, and all the objects found, they must be carefully packed and sent to me at Potsdam. In case he makes any difficulty in surrendering the said objects in an amiable manner, he is to be threatened with arrest; and, if that does not suffice, he is to be actually arrested, and you will take possession of everything, without apology; but afterwards he is to be allowed to continue his journey."

The Resident, on receiving this order, April 19th, was bewildered, as a wiser than he might have been; for the "note" which was to have been "herein inclosed" was not inclosed, and therefore the book was not "specified." Nor was the Resident acquainted with the king's handwriting. The great spring fair of Frankfort was in full tide; strangers were arriving every hour, and a Voltaire might easily slip through the city. Goethe speaks in his Autobiography of the town of booths springing up within the town of stone, and of the bustle and stir of these occasions, so joyous and memorable to children. Freytag, after taking due precautions, wrote for further instructions concerning the unspecified book. And besides, "If Voltaire should say that he has sent his baggage on before him, is he to be detained a prisoner here until he has had it brought back?"

After the usual week's interval (Frankfort and Potsdam were five or six days apart in the mail service of the time), the answer came: "If the baggage has already passed beyond Frankfort, Voltaire is to be kept in sight until he shall have caused it to be brought back, and delivered into your own hands the royal manuscripts. . . . . The book which is to be principally returned is entitled 'Œuvres de Poësie.'" Fredersdorff did not "specify" whether this book was one of the royal manuscripts, or whether it was a mere printed volume.

For six weeks Freytag and his Aulic Counselor Schmid were in extreme agitation, keeping a watch at every inn and every gate, wondering what kind of monster this De Voltaire could be who had in his possession such unspeakable things. At length, in the evening of May 31st, the culprit arrived. The crisis was upon the vigilant and still bewildered Resident. Unhappily for him, his legal adviser, the Aulic

Counselor Schmid, was then absent from Frankfort, and Freytag felt justified in summoning to his assistance Senator Rucker and Lieutenant Brettwitz, of the Prussian army, who was in the city as a recruiting officer. These three gentlemen, at eight in the morning of June 1st, called upon the traveler at the Golden Lion.

We need not go to Voltaire, nor to Collini, to learn what occurred at the inn that day; for within a few years the official reports of the zealous Freytag and all the other documents appertaining to this case have been published in Germany; and it is from them we learn the extent, the duration, the blundering enormity, of the outrage put upon Voltaire in this free city.[1] He was still in the service of the King of Prussia. He had not resigned; he had not been dismissed; he had not been notified that the king desired his resignation, and wished to have his key and cross returned. As to the "Œuvres de Poësie," they were his own by double right: he had assisted to compose them, and the king had given them to him. They were as much his property as the copy of "La Henriade" was the king's property, which the author had given him in those days of youthful illusion, when the servants of the crown prince used to run to meet an approaching courier in the hope of being the first to convey to the prince's eager hands a packet from Cirey. Freytag shall have the honor of relating to the reader the history of the long day he spent with his two companions at the Golden Lion. He addressed his report to his "very illustrious, very powerful king," his "very gracious king and lord:" —

"As M. de Voltaire arrived yesterday, I went to his hotel with Senator Rucker and Lieutenant de Brettwitz, who happened to be here as a recruiting officer. After the usual salutations, I communicated to him your majesty's very gracious requirement. He was thrown into consternation, closed his eyes, and threw himself back in his chair. So far, I had spoken only of papers. When he had recovered himself, he called to his 'friend' Collini, whom I had taken care to get out of the way, and opened for me two trunks, a large case, and two portfolios. He made a thousand protestations of his fidelity to your majesty; then again felt himself disordered. He has, moreover, all the appearance of a skeleton. In the first trunk was immediately

[1] See Voltaire et Frédéric, par Gustave Desnoiresterres, page 446, etc.

found the packet subjoined, enveloped, and ticketed *sub A*, which I placed in the keeping of the officer, without opening it. The rest of the examination lasted from nine o'clock in the morning until five in the afternoon, and I found only one poem, which he was unwilling to surrender to me, and which I placed in the same packet. Then I caused this packet, *sub A*, to be sealed by the senator, and I placed upon it also my own seal. I asked him, upon his honor, if he had nothing else; and he declared, in the most solemn manner, that he had not.

"We spoke then of the book of 'Œuvres de Poësie.' He said that he had put it into a large box, but that he did not know whether that box was at Leipsic or at Hamburg. I then notified him that I could not allow him to pursue his journey until I had that case. He endeavored in a hundred ways to dissuade me from opposing his departure. He said it was necessary that he should take the waters; his life depended upon it. Not wishing the affair to be brought before the city council, since he gives himself the title of Gentleman of the Chamber of France, and since in such cases the magistrates make many difficulties in authorizing an arrest, I at once agreed with him that he should remain a prisoner in the house where he then was until the arrival of the box from Hamburg or Leipsic; we further arranged that he should give me for my surety two parcels of his papers, such as they happened to lie upon the table, after having closed and sealed them, and that he should sign the agreement subjoined, *sub A, B.* I took measures with the landlord of the hotel, Hoppe by name, who has a brother a lieutenant in your majesty's service, that Voltaire should not escape, nor send away his effects. I had thought to give him for guard some grenadier; I was hindered by the military organization here, which is so defective that I trust less to the vigilance of a sentinel than to the word of the landlord, who confirmed it by an oath. As Voltaire finds himself very weak and suffering, I have confided him to the care of the first physician of the city. I have offered also to accompany him in a carriage in the public gardens, and I have placed at his service all that my cellar and my house contain. Upon which I left him sufficiently tranquil and composed, after he had given me the key and the decoration with the ribbon.

"In the evening, at seven o'clock, he sent me his commission as chamberlain, *sub C;* and this morning a manuscript in the king's handwriting, *sub D*, which he said he had found under the table. I cannot know how many more packages he has, and as I do not know the nature and quantity, little or great, of the papers which I am to search for, the most convenient course would be to send hither a secretary of the king to make a minute examination; and this so much

the more, as I do not in the least know your majesty's handwriting. Finally, Voltaire wrote in my presence to his agent at Leipsic to send me the case, and he told me to write to the intimate counselor of your majesty, De Fredersdorff, to obtain an order that he should not be kept here any longer. He even desired that I should send that letter by a special courier; but as I have already lost three louis d'or in unnecessary expenses, I have used the ordinary post.

"I gave him a receipt for the two parcels of manuscripts which he placed in my hands. I also, at his urgent request, gave him a note, which he intends to send to his niece to console her, and in which I promised him that, after the arrival of the case from Leipsic, he shall be detained here no longer."

No narrative of this day's proceedings written by Voltaire mentions that he was subjected to the blind fumbling of these men among his papers for eight hours. He may have exaggerated some details, and, perhaps, imagined some; but his relation of the events conveys no adequate idea of the amount of ignominy which he had to suffer. The agreement which honest Freytag was so good as to sign, for the consolation of Madame Denis, was as follows: —

"MONSIEUR, — As soon as the large packing-case arrives, wherein is the 'Œuvre de Poësie' of the king, which his majesty requires, you can go whithersoever shall seem good to you. At Frankfort, June 1st. FREYTAG, Resident."

The Resident was obliging enough to write and sign this twice: once for the captive, and again for his niece. It was probably upon her copy that Voltaire wrote, *Good for the œuvre de poëshie of the king your master;* both he and his secretary insisting that Freytag spelled *poësie* with a redundant letter. The reader will have observed how dutiful and submissive the ravaged author was: sending round to Freytag's house the same evening a paper which the Resident, after a day's search, had overlooked; and the next morning a manuscript in the king's own hand, which, wonderful to relate, was found under the table!

He was now a prisoner at the Golden Lion, and would have had a sentinel at his door, but for Freytag's distrust of the Frankfort grenadiers. He had signed a parole not to go beyond the garden of the inn. These arrangements made and Madame Denis notified, he seemed tranquil, and kept Collini and the

copyist steadily employed at the "Annals of the Empire." The great box containing the royal poems might have been dispatched by way of Hamburg, and Strasbourg itself was four days distant by post-chaise. He might be detained several days, but he seemed to accept the situation. He wrapped himself in secrecy. During the first days of his detention, he wrote a letter of great length to Koenig, and two letters to his guardian angels, but did not tell either of them what had happened. Collini thought him peacefully engaged upon the Annals. He should have known his chief better, and, indeed, later in his memoirs, he relates an anecdote of this time, which betrays irritation: —

"Voltaire," he remarks, "was beside himself when he thought he had been wronged. His first movements were impetuous, but he soon recovered self-possession. I was a witness at Frankfort of a trait of vivacity on his part which will give a just idea of that impatience of which he was not the master. The bookseller, Van Duren, came one morning to present a bill for some books that he had sent to Voltaire thirteen years before. Van Duren could not be admitted to speak to him, and left me the account. Voltaire read it, and found that the sum demanded was for some copies of his own works. He was indignant. The bookseller returned after dinner; my illustrious traveling companion and I were walking in the garden of the inn. Scarcely did he perceive Van Duren than he went to him quicker than lightning, gave him a box on the ear, and immediately retired. It is the only time I ever saw him strike any one. Judge of my embarrassment. I found myself all at once alone, face to face with the boxed bookseller. What to say to him? I tried my best to console him; but I was so much confused that I could find nothing better to say than that, after all, the blow came from a great man. The bookseller's bill is in my hand at this time as a souvenir of that memorable blow. Except for such trifling vivacities as these he was good and benevolent."

Upon the fifth day of his detention, he had the honor of a second visit from the Prussian Resident, which was not reassuring to either of them. "He begins already," wrote Freytag to Fredersdorff, "to make some good friends here, who flatter him, perhaps, with the hope of his obtaining the support of

the city council. When I returned to his rooms he was insolent enough. He asked to lodge elsewhere. He wished to pay his court to the Duke of Meiningen. But I had to refuse him, although with politeness. Then he cried, 'What! your king wishes to arrest me here, in an imperial city? Why did he not do it in his own states? You are a man without pity; you are killing me; you will all surely lose the king's favor.' After replying coldly, I withdrew." The Resident owned that he was embarrassed and alarmed; he wished to be relieved of the duty imposed upon him, and informed Fredersdorff that he must have more express and formal orders.

The interview exasperated the prisoner also, and he seems instantly to have resorted to the expedient of an appeal to the emperor; for his appeal is dated June 5th, the day on which Freytag wrote to Fredersdorff. The court in all Europe that held the King of Prussia in the deepest antipathy was that of the Empress Maria Theresa, from whom Frederic had snatched the province of Silesia at the beginning of his reign, and for the retention of which he was about to fight again in the Seven Years' War. The emperor, Francis I., Duke of Lorraine by inheritance, had known Voltaire of old, and shown him some favor. To him the captive now made an elaborate, artful, but secret appeal, and inclosed it in a letter to one of the Austrian ministers. He sent also for the emperor's perusal a copy of the letter which Frederic had written him in reply to Madame Denis's prediction that the King of Prussia would be the death of him. He gave a brief relation of his arrest, and entreated the emperor to give secret orders to his minister at Frankfort to take him under his protection, and prevent the magistrates from violating the laws of "*his imperial city* of Frankfort." His sacred majesty, he said, had a thousand ways of supporting the laws of the empire and of Frankfort. "I do not think," he added, "that we live in so unhappy a time that M. Freytag can with impunity render himself master of the life and person of a stranger in the city where his sacred majesty was crowned." To the Austrian minister he dropped a hint as a possible lure. He said that if he could converse with their sacred majesties, *there were things he should say to them that might be of use.* It would be extremely difficult for him, he said, to make the journey *incog-*

nito; but if, some time hence, when his health should be a little reëstablished, they would indicate a house in Vienna where he could remain unknown for some days, he would not hesitate.

He wrote also to M. d'Argenson, of the French ministry, stating his situation, and assuring him that, whatever knowledge of the human heart he may have acquired, there were some things he would tell him, *on his return*, that would astonish him.

Frederic, however, had chosen his ground well; his influence at Frankfort proved to be paramount; and there was not a court that would not then have seized the chance of gaining a point with the King of Prussia by at least letting alone a captive author who had offended him. "My landlord," wrote Voltaire, June 5th, "at whose house I am in prison by an unheard-of outrage, told me to-day that the minister of the King of Prussia, the Sieur Freytag, is held in horror by all the city, but that no one dares resist him." No one did resist him on this occasion. The King of Prussia had his way in Frankfort as if it had been one of the cities of his inheritance.

The great box was long in coming. On the ninth day of his detention his niece arrived, Madame Denis, who had come post-haste from Strasbourg as soon as she had heard of this strange arrest. We can easily imagine the stout, impetuous lady rushing into the Golden Lion, all flushed and dusty from her four days' ride, and exclaiming, as she saw his wasted form and face, "*Mon oncle!* I knew that man would be the death of you!" But she began at once to do whatever lay in her power to prevent the fulfillment of her prophecy; and her first act was to write a letter to the King of Prussia, which was prudent, moderate, and well calculated to answer its purpose. In his best estate, her uncle was not robust; but he was now, through this long series of exciting events, miserable, weak, and exhausted.

"I come here to conduct my uncle to the waters of Plombières; I find him dying, and, as a climax of evils, under arrest, by your majesty's orders, in an inn, without being able to breathe the open air. . . . . My uncle, no doubt, has been very much in the wrong toward your majesty, since your majesty, to whom he has always been attached with so much enthusiasm, treats him with such hardness. But,

sire, deign to remember the fifteen years of bounties with which you have honored him, which at length snatched him from the arms of his family, to whom he has always been a father. Your majesty asks the return of your book which you presented to him. Sire, he is assuredly ready to give it up; he has sworn it to me. He carried it away with him with your permission; he is causing it to be brought here with his papers in a case addressed to your minister. He has himself asked that everything be examined, and everything be taken which can concern your majesty. . . . . Our family will return all of your letters which we shall find at Paris. . . . . Sire, have pity upon my condition and my grief. I have no consolation but in your sacred promises, and in the words so worthy of you, '*I should be in despair to be the cause of the unhappiness of my enemy; how could I be of the unhappiness of my friend?*' These words, sire, traced by your own hand, the hand which has written so many beautiful things, are my dearest hope."

This letter, with the best speed then attainable, could not bring an answer from Potsdam in less than twelve days; and it so chanced that, while these scenes were transacting at Frankfort, the King of Prussia was in a distant province, on one of his tours of inspection. Freytag himself could get no further instructions; and those which he had already received confused and terrified more than they enlightened him. He did not yet know what "writings" the king wanted, nor had he yet any means of judging which of the manuscripts in Voltaire's possession were in the king's hand. If the king's object was to annoy and insult the author of Akakia, his object was attained; if the object was simply to recover the poems and letters, then we must admit that the conduct of the affair was not creditable to the Fredersdorff administration.

Frederic had good reasons to dread the circulation of his poems, just then. That "Palladion" of his, a poem in six cantos, in puerile imitation of "La Pucelle," goes far beyond Voltaire in burlesquing the Christian traditions and beliefs. He treats Jehovah and his "court" precisely in the tone of Lucian when he brings Jupiter and Juno upon the scene. He describes the heavenly host as having had their vocal organs improved in the mode of Italy.

"Imaginez, si vous pouvez, des anges,
Des chérubins, vers le haut bout placés,

Des séraphins, des trônes, des archanges,
Pour bien chanter de bonne heure châtrés;
Imaginez, au milieu d'eux, que brille
Du vieux papa la celeste famille;
Près de sa dextre on voit, avec son fils,
Une beauté, reine du paradis,
Beauté faisant enfants en son jeune age."[1]

We can conceive that the "head of the Protestant interest" would not like to have a cheap edition of this poem published; for the above is very far from being the passage most offensive to Christians. In the same canto, all that Catholics hold most sacred and most venerable is tossed in a very ragged blanket. Further on, the scandals of the Russian court, the barbarism of the Russian people, and the horrors of Siberia are treated at great length and with riotous freedom. Austria is not spared, nor the Pope, nor Frederic's own officers and comrades. The poem ends with the "good Father Eternal" turning out of heaven "the saints and sophists," and putting in their places "the honest deists," who, being seated at the right hand, "see the profile of the celestial King." Assuredly the royal author of this free and foolish poem would have gladly seen it safe in his own cabinet; at least, so long as the stress of politics lasted. Kings need not satirize powerful neighbors, nor scoff at their own subjects' cherished beliefs and sacred usages. It is not their vocation.

The great box being still delayed, there was no choice but to wait at the Golden Lion, and push on the Annals. The detention of a renowned author was making a stir in Frankfort and adjacent duchies. Great company alighted at the Golden Lion inn; among others, that Duke of Meiningen to whom the captive wished to pay his court. Work upon the Annals seldom ceased, and, meanwhile, both uncle and niece looked all round the compass for any chance of relief. Among other letters, Madame Denis wrote one to the Prussian ambassador in France, Lord Keith, asking his interposition, and the ambassador in his reply favored the prisoner with some good advice. "Kings have long arms," said he. He urged her to dispose her uncle to submission. Where could he go? asked the ambassador. Not to any country where the Inquisition was active and powerful. Not to any Mahometan country,

[1] Canto ii.

after such a tragedy as he had composed upon Mahomet. "He is too old to go to China and turn mandarin. In one word, if he is wise, it is only in France that he will feel at home. He has friends there; you will have him with you for the rest of his days. Do not allow him to exclude himself from the joy of returning to France; and you know well that if he launches offensive words and epigrams against the king, my master, one word which he should order me to say to the court of France would suffice to prevent M. de Voltaire from returning, and too late he would repent of his conduct. *Genus irritabile vatum;* your uncle does not falsify the saying. Moderate him. . . . . The king, my master, has never done foul deeds; I defy his enemies to mention one; but if some big and strong Prussian, offended by your uncle's words, should give him a blow upon the head with his fist, he would crush your uncle. . . . . Don't show this to him; burn it; but give him the substance of it, as from yourself."

Voltaire scarcely needed this advice. He knew better, perhaps, than any ambassador, when it was safe to be bold, and when it was indispensable to crouch. Like one of those alert and irrepressible boys who pass their days in the engine-room of a great sea-going steamer, running loose and climbing free among the ponderous machinery; who know the precise instant when to dodge the huge descending beam, and dare to ride aloft upon it as it ascends; who know where the iron is hot and where cool, and every aperture through which escape is possible; so this agile spirit lived among the monarchies and hierarchies of the time, familiar and fearless, courting and avoiding the crushing strokes of power, and answering saucily from remote and comfortable nooks which his masters could not reach. He could be saucy enough, sometimes, before he had reached a coigne of vantage. He received, on one of these days of detention at Frankfort, a parcel by the post; and Freytag wrote to inquire if it had any relation to their affair. "It is a package of my works," he wrote in reply, "which I desire to have corrected and rebound, in order to make a present of them to M. Schmid and M. Freytag."

At length, after eighteen days of delay, the important case arrived, and was duly delivered at the house of the Resident, to whom it was addressed. This was Monday, June 18th,

the day when the courier was due from Potsdam, by whom Freytag expected those elucidating orders of which he acutely felt the need. The courier was not due until eleven A. M., but the box arrived early in the morning; and Voltaire at once made preparations for departure, thinking to leave Frankfort about three in the afternoon. He had not the least doubt of being allowed to depart, since he held the written engagement of the Resident to that effect; and, accordingly, he at once dispatched Collini to the Resident's house, to be present at the opening of the box. "Freytag," says Collini, "answered me brusquely that he had not time to attend to the opening until the afternoon." Voltaire sent again and again; sent several times in the course of an hour, entreating the Resident to proceed with the opening. Freytag reports that he advised the "importunate" captive to be patient, "seeing that this was the Monday on which letters came from Berlin."

A letter did indeed arrive toward noon from Fredersdorff, which was disappointing in the extreme to all parties. The king had not yet returned to the capital; he was coming in a few days; and Freytag was enjoined to do nothing further in the business whatever until he had received the king's express orders, which he might expect by the next mail, due on Thursday. "You are to pay no regard," added Fredersdorff, "to anything which the impatience of M. de Voltaire may make him say; you have to go on as you have begun, following the supreme orders which you have received." Freytag at once communicated this disagreeable intelligence with all possible politeness: —

"Monsieur, by a precise order, which I have this moment received, I have the honor to say to you, monsieur, that the intention of the king is that everything should remain in the condition in which the affair is at present; without disturbing and without unpacking the box in question, without sending back the cross and key, and without making the least movement until the next post, which will arrive on Thursday. I hope that these orders are the consequence of my report of the 5th of this month, in which I could not sufficiently praise and admire your resignation to the will of the king, your obedience in remaining in the house where you are, despite your infirmity, and your sincere protestations of fidelity towards his majesty. If for this I merit, monsieur, your friendship and good-will, I shall be charmed to be able to name myself your very humble and obedient servant."

Nothing could be more polite, nothing more exasperating. Here was the most irritable of the *genus irritabile*, a man as absorbed in work as a prime minister, eager to get where he could go on with that work to advantage; and here was a lady, a true child of Paris, to whom a palace out of Paris had been a prison; and there was the traveling carriage packed and ready; and it was Monday afternoon; and now comes a note politely saying, You cannot stir before Thursday at the earliest, and, perhaps, not then! This, too, after eighteen days' previous detention, of which every hour was a distinct and galling outrage, and when the prisoner held the written promise of the king's representative that he should be permitted to go whithersoever he would as soon as the case of books arrived and the work of *poësie* was taken therefrom. The case had arrived; the book was in it; and he was a prisoner still. Voltaire, upon receiving Freytag's note, went himself to his house, and asked to see the king's orders. Freytag, as Collini reports, "stammered, refused, and used language violently insulting."

The situation now had something of the terrible in it; for the unknown is terrible. What *could* be the king's object? Perhaps he had repented, and was about to summon the captive back; perhaps he was preparing new and worse ignominy: in either case, it behoved the prisoner to take measures. Madame Denis, as a matter of course, feared the worst. That very evening she wrote a moving letter to one of her uncle's friends at the Prussian court, either D'Argens, or the Abbé de Prades, in which she dwelt upon this new horror: "M. de Voltaire has fulfilled all his engagements, and still he is detained a prisoner. . . . . For three years past I have been expecting the King of Prussia to cause his death," etc. She wrote also a letter to Madame de Pompadour, recounting the circumstances. "My uncle," she added, "has labored assiduously for two years to perfect the talents of the King of Prussia. He has served him with a zeal of which there are few examples. The recompense he receives is cruel. I have taken the liberty to write to that prince a letter steeped in my tears. I dictate this memoir to a man on whom I rely, unable to write myself, having been already bled twice, and my uncle being in bed, without help."

In these distressing circumstances Voltaire suddenly resolved to act upon the principle formulated by Beaumarchais, when he said, "If I were accused of stealing the towers of Notre Dame, I should escape first and discuss afterward." He resolved to fly. His plan was to abandon the great box of books to Freytag, leave Madame Denis at the Golden Lion in charge of his effects and his interests, and go with Collini alone, in a hired chaise, to Mayence, twenty miles distant, and thence press on to a place of safety, if any such there were in Europe for such a fugitive. He fixed upon Wednesday, June 20th, for the attempt. The post from Berlin was due on the day following, but he was determined not to wait for new complications.

The hour having arrived, Voltaire and his secretary, followed by a servant carrying two portfolios and a heavy cash-box, slipped away from the Golden Lion, without, as they thought, being observed. They walked to the place appointed, found their carriage, got safely into it, and rode away toward the Mayence gate. "Our departure," says Collini, "resembled the flight of two criminals." What next occurred let the vigilant Freytag first relate, as he related it to Fredersdorff, a few hours after: —

"It was toward three o'clock in the afternoon, on Wednesday, the 20th, that the spy posted by me at the Golden Lion, the lodging of Voltaire, came to me, breathless, with the news that he had fled. Unfortunately, neither my secretary nor any servant was at hand. In this extremity I had recourse to all my neighborhood. I sent, post-haste, messengers upon the three principal roads, to Hanau, to Friedeberg, and to Mayence. I dressed myself hurriedly, and rushed headlong to the Golden Lion, as if running a race. There I learned that Voltaire, in a costume of black velvet, had directed his steps toward the Crown-of-the-Empire Hotel, where he had stopped a post-chaise returning to Mayence, in which he had started. The electoral chancellor, Baron Munch, was so obliging as to place at my disposal, in this extremity, his state carriage, with six seats, that was standing before the Lion. I dispatched beforehand a courier to the Mayence gate, to detain Voltaire there until my arrival. I hurried away immediately to the house of my colleague, the Aulic Counselor Schmid, who, to complete my ill-luck, I found was not at home. He was half a league from the city, at his country house. One of his counting-room clerks rode thither on horseback in ten minutes, and went afterwards to the house of the ruling burgomaster, of whose proceedings I shall speak further on.

"I overtook Voltaire and his Italian secretary, in a hired chaise, just under the tree at the turnpike. He had lost his memorandum book going across the city, and had consumed about four minutes in looking for it, but for which I should not have found him upon the territory of Frankfort. My character had weight enough with the under-officer at the gate to induce him to arrest Voltaire upon the spot; and not till then did I perceive what those two people really were. The worst bandits could not have made such struggles to get away. He told me to my face, among other things, that I had caused a thousand thalers to be asked of him as the price of his release. He denied his engagements, and he even told me that he had been several times at my house. The young secretary, who, in truth, appears to have much intelligence, confirmed all that he said, with an effrontery such as I have never seen equaled in the world. I left them in charge of the under-officer, who commanded six men, and I flew to the principal guard, and from there to the burgomaster's house.

"That official at first made many difficulties, both because the royal requisition had not arrived, and because M. de Voltaire was in the service of the King of France. But my presence and the requisition subjoined, *sub C* (which, however, was not drawn and signed by us two until the next day), induced the burgomaster, despite all the proceedings of Voltaire, to confirm the arrest, and to promise the extradition, contrary to the ordinary rules. This provisionary order of the burgomaster was ratified on Thursday morning by a decision of the council *in pleno*, and transmitted to me by one of the city secretaries, with the assurance of a deference the most invariable and the most submissive towards his majesty.

"If I should report all the doings, truly unimaginable, of Voltaire during his arrest, I should have to fill some leaves. One, however, I cannot refrain from mentioning. On returning to the barrier with the burgomaster's order, I learned that Voltaire had employed the time in destroying part of his papers. I offered to take him to my own house, where he would remain confined until the next day. He then got into the six-seated state carriage which I had used, and he gave me, as he said, all his wealth. He had, in fact, a little cash-box, which my servant could scarcely lift. Nevertheless, when we were about to start, he said that he would prefer to be openly a prisoner than be concealed in my house. Then I caused some men to march on both sides of the carriage, and I went myself, like this prisoner, in the same carriage, partly open, across the city, where the crowd had then become exceedingly great.

"The landlord of the Golden Lion being unwilling to have Voltaire any longer in his house, on account of his incredible parsimony, I de-

posited him at the house of the Aulic Counselor Schmid, being resolved to decide nothing without his good advice, and without his acquiescence in the mode of captivity which should in future be applied to the prisoner. On his return to the city the Aulic Counselor went immediately to the burgomaster's house, not only for the purpose of favorably disposing him, but also to give him his guarantee with regard to the royal requisition. He met there the pretended niece of Voltaire, but whom I consider as quite another sort of person; for yesterday a letter arrived at its destination bearing the address *Madame de Voltaire*. As this impudent hussy was going about in the city stunning the magistrates, the burgomaster had her arrested, together with the secretary; and as Voltaire, in the house of Schmid, had tried to escape a second time, he was conducted to the Goat inn, where a guard was assigned to each prisoner, which we reduced to two soldiers after the receipt of your last letter."

In this report, the simplicity of the Resident reveals the bungling outrage in a more odious light than Voltaire's art or Collini's anger exhibits it. Here were three persons arrested, with every circumstance of infamy, without any pretense of law or semblance of right. Many years after, Collini wrote his recollections of this day's experience. Voltaire was then no longer among the living, and his ancient secretary had nothing to gain or lose from him or his. He adds some curious details: —

"Having reached the gate of the city that leads to the Mayence road, our carriage was stopped, and the Resident was notified of an attempt to get away. While we were waiting for his coming, Voltaire sent his servant to Madame Denis. Freytag soon arrived in a carriage escorted by soldiers, and made us get into it, accompanying the order with imprecations and insults. Forgetting that he represented the king, his master, he got in with us, and thus, like a policeman, conducted us across the city, through crowds of the populace. In this way we were conducted to the house of a merchant named Schmid, who had the title of counselor to the King of Prussia, and was the substitute of Freytag. The door is barricaded, and sentinels are posted to keep out the assembled people. We are taken into the counting-house; clerks, valets, and female servants surround us. Madame Schmid passes in front of Voltaire with a disdainful expression, and listens to the tale of Freytag, who recounts with the air of a bully how he achieved this important capture, and vaunts his address and courage.

"They take possession of our effects and the cash box; they make

us give up all the money we had in our pockets; they take away from Voltaire his watch, his snuff-box, and some jewels that he wears. He asks for a receipt; it is refused. 'Count this money,' says Schmid to his clerks; 'these are the sort of fellows who are capable of maintaining that there was twice as much money.' I ask by what right they arrested me, and I insist strongly that a formal accusation should be drawn up. They threaten to commit me to the guard-house. Voltaire reclaims his snuff-box, because he cannot do without snuff. They reply that the custom is to seize everything. His eyes sparkle with fury, and from time to time he raises them toward mine, as if to interrogate them. Suddenly, perceiving a door partly open, he plunges toward it, and goes out. Madame Schmid gets together a squad of shopmen and three maids, puts herself at their head, and runs after the fugitive. 'Can I not, then,' cries he, '*pourvoir aux besoins de la nature?*' He is allowed. They range themselves in a circle around him, and, afterward, lead him back to the counting-room.

"On his reëntering, Schmid, who took this as a personal offense, cried out, 'Wretch! you shall be treated without pity and without ceremony!' and the servants renewed their outcries. Voltaire, beside himself with passion, rushed a second time into the yard, and again they brought him back. This scene had made the Resident and all his gang thirsty. Schmid had some wine brought, and the crowd began to drink the health of his excellency Monseigneur Freytag!

"After waiting two hours, the time had come to dispose of the prisoners. The portfolios and the cash-box were thrown into an empty trunk, which was fastened with a padlock, and sealed with a paper stamped with the arms of Voltaire and the cipher of Schmid. Dorn, clerk to Freytag, was ordered to conduct us. He took us to a low tavern called the Goat, where twelve soldiers, commanded by an under-officer, attended us. There Voltaire was shut up in a chamber with three soldiers who had fixed bayonets. I was separated from him and guarded in the same way. Though I were to live centuries, I shall never forget the atrocities of that day.

"Madame Denis had not abandoned her uncle. Scarcely had she heard of Voltaire's arrest than she hastened to the burgomaster to demand his release. That functionary, a man weak and limited, had been gained over by Schmid. He not only refused to be just and to listen to Madame Denis, but he ordered her to remain under arrest at her hotel. This explains why Voltaire was deprived of the assistance of his niece during the scandalous scene at the counting-house.

"I ought not to forget one anecdote. When we were arrested at the gate of Frankfort, and while we were waiting in the carriage for the decision of Monseigneur Freytag, he drew some papers from one

of his portfolios, and said, as he gave them to me, 'Hide that about you.' I concealed the papers in that garment which an ingenious writer has named the indispensable one, thoroughly resolved to prevent all researches that could be made in that asylum. In the evening, at the Goat, three soldiers guarded me in my room, and kept their eyes upon me. I burned, nevertheless, to examine those papers, which I believed to be of the greatest importance, as that word is usually understood. To satisfy my curiosity and deceive the vigilance of my guards, I went to bed in my clothes. Concealed by my curtains, I carefully drew the precious deposit from the place where I had put it. It proved to be the poem of 'La Pucelle,' so far as it had then been written.

"While he was in Schmid's yard, surrounded by madame and her squad, I was called to go to his assistance. I go out; I find him in a corner surrounded by persons closely watching him to prevent his flight; and I see him bent over, putting his fingers into his mouth, and trying all he could to vomit. Terrified, I cry out, 'Are you sick, then?' He looks at me with tears gushing from his eyes. He says to me, in a low voice, *Fingo*, *fingo* (I am making believe). These words reassure me. I pretend to believe that he is not well, and I give him my arm to assist him to return to the counting-house. He hoped by that stratagem to appease the fury of that *canaille*, and induce them to treat him with more moderation.

"The redoubtable Dorn, after having deposited us at the Goat, went with some soldiers to the Golden Lion, where Madame Denis, by the burgomaster's orders, was under arrest. He left his squad on the stairs, and presented himself to that lady, saying to her that her uncle wished to see her, and that he had come to conduct her to him. Ignorant of what had passed at Schmid's house, she hastened to go. Dorn gave her his arm. Scarcely was she out of the inn than the three soldiers surrounded her, and conducted her, not to her uncle's room at the Goat, but to a garret of the same inn, furnished only with a little bed, where she had, to use Voltaire's expression, only soldiers for *femmes de chambre*, and their bayonets for curtains. Dorn had the insolence to have his supper brought to the room, and, without regarding the horrible convulsions into which such an adventure had thrown Madame Denis, he proceeded to eat it, and to empty bottle after bottle."

Voltaire adds that she was menaced with violence; and, when we consider that the astute Freytag regarded her as a disreputable person, a Madame de Voltaire *pro tem.*, it is highly probable that Dorn was not respectful in his demeanor

toward her. We can easily surmise what they thought of her "horrible convulsions."

The situation, then, the next morning, — Thursday, June 21, 1753, — was as follows: Voltaire, his niece, and his secretary were prisoners at the Goat tavern, guarded by soldiers; the great box was unopened at the Resident's house; Freytag, Schmid, Dorn, and their assistants were happy in the feeling that they had acquitted themselves like Prussians; all Frankfort was excited; and the regular mail from Berlin was expected about the middle of the day. The mail arrived, and in it was a letter from Fredersdorff, dated June 16th, containing orders from the king, who had just returned from his tour in the province of Prussia: —

"Upon his happy return from Prussia, his majesty has very graciously approved what you have done, according to his orders, with regard to M. de Voltaire. But, not to put any further obstacle to his projected journey to Plombières, his majesty permits him to proceed, on condition that he delivers to you in form a promise to send back faithfully the original of the book which belongs to his majesty, within a limited time, which shall be specified, without taking or permitting to be taken a copy of the same; and this upon his word as an honest man, and with the clause that, in case he shall fail in this, he will recognize himself in advance as his prisoner, in whatever country he may be. Be pleased, therefore, to present to him this promise, so conceived, and when he shall have written and signed it to let him depart in peace and with politeness. You will inform me of the result by the next courier. P. S. It is indispensable that M. de Voltaire should write entirely with his own hand, as well as sign and seal the form of engagement which you will present to him."

Surely, *now* the commodious traveling carriage may be ordered for three o'clock, and the prisoners rumble on to Mayence, a pleasant afternoon's ride in the long days of June. Not so. The attempt to escape was an audacity so flagrant, in the eyes of Freytag, that he deemed it due to the king's majesty to detain the prisoner until the king had been informed of it and had sent new orders. "If," said Freytag, "this man had waited a little, we could have let him go; but now it is our duty to wait, in all reverence, the requisition and

the very gracious further directions of the king." It was in vain to protest. Voltaire wrote to the Margravine of Bayreuth, asking her intercession. For the sake of his niece, he even appealed to the compassion of Freytag, and entreated him to let them go back to the Golden Lion. "We are very uncomfortable here, without servants, without help, surrounded by soldiers. We conjure you to ameliorate our condition. You have had the goodness to promise to take away this numerous guard. Suffer us to return to the Golden Lion upon our oath not to leave until his majesty the King of Prussia permits us. There is a little garden there, necessary for my health. All our effects are still there; we are paying for two lodgings."

Some mitigations of their lot appear to have been conceded by the Resident. Madame Denis and the secretary were allowed to go out, but they all continued to live at the Goat, where Voltaire was still closely confined to his room, and guarded by two sentinels day and night. Four days passed without further change. Then arrived from Berlin orders still more clear and positive to let them all go, the king being evidently impatient to be rid of the business, having other matters pressing upon him. But, alas! it now occurred to the anxious Freytag that when the king gave those orders his majesty had not yet heard of the flagrant attempt of Voltaire and his secretary to escape. Would he have given such orders if he had? Probably not, thought the sapient representative of the majesty of Prussia. At least, it would not become *him* to decide the question by enlarging the prisoner! The Resident therefore merely removed the guards, after exacting from Voltaire his parole not to leave his room. The great box was now opened, and the book of royal poetry taken from it. The two packets of manuscript were restored to their owner. Every object mentioned in the king's orders had been accomplished. The captive had been detained twenty-five days; twice the king had ordered his release; and still there he was, a close prisoner in one room of an inferior inn, watched by spies at every hour.

But, at length, this extreme indignity put upon a free city roused public indignation to such a point that the burgomaster and his colleagues in the city government showed some resentment at it. The magistrate called upon the prisoner. Gentle-

men attached to the court of the Prince of Meiningen were in frequent attendance, and testified their sympathy and indignation. The Resident, always alarmed, and now in extreme terror, allowed his captive "the liberty of the inn," and made attempts to come to a settlement with regard to the money which he had taken from him, from which all the expenses of the arrest and detention were to be deducted. There were fierce recriminations. Voltaire and Collini declare in the most positive manner, and in legal form, that money and valuable articles were stolen from them, — a thing likely enough during a five weeks' contention, in which so many irresponsible persons took part. It was not until July 5th, after a detention of thirty-five days, that orders came from the king so precise and peremptory that neither Freytag nor Schmid could find any reason or pretext for holding their prisoner longer. But the outraged poet came near providing them with something more than a pretext.

"The next day," continues Collini, "the 6th, we went back to the Golden Lion. Voltaire immediately summoned a notary, before whom he solemnly protested all the vexations and injustices committed against him. I also made my protestation, and we prepared for our departure on the morrow. A movement of vivacity on Voltaire's part came near retaining us longer at Frankfort and plunging us into new misfortunes. In the morning, before starting, I loaded two pistols, which we usually had in the carriage. At this moment Dorn stepped softly along the corridor and went past the room, the door of which was opened. Voltaire perceived him in the attitude of a man who was playing the spy. The recollection of the past kindling his anger, he seized a pistol and rushed toward Dorn. I had only time enough to cry out and stop him."

Dorn entered complaint against his assailant, but the secretary of the city contrived to "arrange" the matter, and, in the course of the day, July 7th, Voltaire, "his secretary and suite," left Frankfort, and reached Mayence the same day. Madame Denis remained at Frankfort one day longer, and then left for Paris, whence danger threatened.

During all this period of strife and excitement, Voltaire continued to labor steadily upon his "Annals of the Empire," aided by his secretary and copyist, and he made good progress

in the work. July 3d, two days before he was set at liberty, he wrote to the Duchess of Saxe-Gotha that, but for his detention, "our emperors would now be in their frames," and that, despite all hindrances, he had written nearly as far as Charles V. In other words, the hardest half of the work was done. This seems incredible; but, when all was over, we find him writing thus to his guardian angel, D'Argental: "From Gotha to Strasbourg, whether living with princes or jailors, whether in palaces or in prison, I have tranquilly labored five hours a day at the same work." Even in the agony of the strife with Freytag, he wrote very philosophically to the duchess. "History," said he, "is little more than a picture of human miseries. The adventure of my niece and myself is not worthy to fill so much as a little corner in the border of that picture; but the ridicule which is joined to the horror of it may save it some time from oblivion. The extreme of the ridiculous goes far. . . . . For my own part, I deserve to be abandoned by France, since I abandoned the king, my master, — and a very good master, — for another; all my misfortunes are only my due. But, for my niece, who traveled two hundred leagues with a passport from her king, and who came to conduct to the waters a dying uncle, what a fatal recompense she receives for a good action!" He was fortunate in having upon his hands the only one of his immense series of works upon which he could have labored in such untoward circumstances.

The King of Prussia, as we see from his letters to his sister and others, had not then, and he never had, the least sense of the iniquity of the proceedings at Frankfort, nor the least belief in the acuteness of the sufferings they caused. He gloried in them, rather; he was not ashamed to have used his king's truncheon to avenge the scratches given by a light pen.

[Frederic to his sister of Bayreuth, June 16, 1753.] "I wish you, my dear sister, better luck than I have had with *messieurs les beaux esprits*. I do not believe that you have need of them to enlighten your mind. They would have more need of your wisdom. Madame du Deffand never wished to see Voltaire. They asked her why not. Because, said she, I buy his mind for two florins, and I enjoy his works without exposing myself to his malice." [1]

[1] Voltaire and Madame du Deffand were familiar correspondents for forty-six years, and friends for half a century. Their published correspondence includes more than two hundred letters.

[From the Margravine of Bayreuth to her brother, the King of Prussia, June 29, 1753.] "I have just received a packet from Voltaire and Madame Denis, which I take the liberty of sending to you. I am annoyed that they apply to me; but, for fear of being compromised in this bad business, I send you, my dearest brother, what I have received from them. The letter of Madame Denis shows some skill and talent; it appears that she is not informed of the reasons which induced you to have her uncle arrested. If he had taken her advice he would have acted more wisely. I consider him the most unworthy and contemptible of men if he has been wanting in respect towards you in his writings or in his words; such conduct can only draw upon him the contempt of worthy people. A man intense and bilious as he is heaps folly upon folly when once he has begun. His age, his infirmities, and his reputation, blasted by this catastrophe, inspire me nevertheless with some compassion for him. A man reduced to despair is capable of everything. Perhaps, my dearest brother, you will think that I have too much indulgence for him on account of his genius; but you will not disapprove my having for him the pity which we owe to the guilty when they are wretched, and when even we are obliged to punish them. His destiny is like that of Tasso and Milton. They ended their days in obscurity; he may end his in the same way. If the effort which poets make in composing epic poems turns their heads, we had better be deprived of that kind of poetry in future."

[Frederic to his sister of Bayreuth, July 7, 1753.] "I have read the letter of Voltaire and la Denis; they lie, both of them, and do not testify justly. Their adventure is very different from what they say; but, despite all their misdeeds, I gave orders, fifteen days ago, to allow them to set out. You could not believe, my dear sister, to what a point those people can histrionicize; all those convulsions, those maladies, those despairings, — all of it is nothing but a play. I was the dupe of it at first, but not at all at the end. *Voltaire dares not return to France;* he will go to Switzerland, and wander from country to country. For my part, I regard not the evil which he pretends to do me, but I have hindered him from doing me any more; and for this reason I made him give back my verses and all the letters I have written him."

The public indignation gave the dull and timorous Resident much uneasiness, and he wrote to Berlin for comfort. He feared he had gone too far, and had laid himself open to hostile action on the part of the burgomaster and his colleagues. The King of Prussia, in the most formal and emphatic man-

ner, justified and applauded all that Freytag had done in his name. Fredersdorff wrote thus to the Resident, July 14, 1753, a week after Voltaire's departure: —

"You did nothing except upon royal order, and you executed it in such a way that his majesty is satisfied with your conduct. You have nothing to fear from the magistracy of the city, since you acted only upon the directions of your sovereign and as a personage having a royal character; and this you can declare openly. As to Voltaire, he is a man without honor. His majesty does not wish to commit himself with him in any way, and now that he has delivered the objects sought, let him go wherever he pleases. If he is at Frankfort still, let him cry out at his ease; and you are no more to enter into explanations with him, as to your conduct, than with the magistracy. But you can tell him to his face that it is useless for him to assume the rank of Gentleman of the Chamber to the King of France, and that if he does so at Paris the Bastille will be his recompense. You have acted like a faithful servant of the king and according to his order, and the lies and calumnies of Voltaire find credence neither here nor elsewhere."

This is explicit enough. We may say also that it was due to Freytag, who knew not what he did, and who was confused by blundering, hasty, incomplete orders from the capital. Frederic amused himself, moreover, with attempting to express in epigrams his aversion to his old friend and master, whose funeral eulogium he was destined to pronounce before the Berlin Academy: —

EPIGRAMME CONTRE VOLTAIRE.

"Voltaire, des neuf Sœurs l'indigne favori,
Est enfin démasqué. Détesté de Paris,
On le brûle à Berlin, on le maudit à Rome.
Si pour être honoré du titre de grand homme
Il suffit d'être fourbe et trompeur effronté,
Avec la Brinvilliers son nom sera cité."[1]

Some months later, on hearing a report of Voltaire's recovery from a dangerous illness, the King of Prussia achieved the following: —

[1] 14 Œuvres de Frédéric, 170. Voltaire, unworthy favorite of the Nine Sisters, is at length unmasked. Detested at Paris, he is burned at Berlin, cursed at Rome. If to be honored with the title of great man it suffices to be a cheat and an impudent deceiver, with the Brinvilliers [noted poisoner of Paris] his name will be cited.

EPITAPH DE VOLTAIRE.

"Ci-gît le seigneur Arouet,
Qui de friponner eut manie.
Ce bel-esprit, toujours adrait,
N'oublia pas son intérêt,
En passant même à l'autre vie.
Lorsqu'il vit le sombre Achéron,
Il chicana le prix du passage de l'onde,
Si bien que le brutal Caron,
D'un coup de pied au ventre appliqué sans façon,
Nous là renvoyé dans ce monde." [1]

These events made a lasting impression upon the people of Frankfort. Twenty years later, when the young Goethe was pressed by the Duke of Weimar to come and reside near his court, his solid old father offered many objections, as Goethe tells us in one of the most pleasing passages of his Autobiography. The old man was hardly a match in argument for his gifted son, aided as he was by a fond mother and a pleading sister. "He was in the habit," says Goethe, "of saving his most stringent argument for the close of the discussion. This consisted of a minute description of Voltaire's adventure with Frederic II. He told us how the unbounded favor, familiarity, mutual obligations, were at once revoked and forgotten; how he had lived to see the comedy out in the arrest of that extraordinary poet and writer by the Frankfort civic guard, on the complaint of the Resident, Freytag, and the warrant of the burgomaster, Fichard, and his confinement for some time in the tavern of the Rose on the Zeil. To this we might have answered in many ways, among others that Voltaire was not free from blame himself; but from filial respect we always yielded the point." [2]

[1] 14 Œuvres de Frédéric, 171. Here lies Lord Arouet, who had a mania for pilfering. This *bel-esprit*, always adroit, forgot not his own interest even in making the passage to the other life. When he saw the sombre Acheron, he so caviled about the fare that the brutal Charon, with a kick in the belly given without ceremony, has sent him back to us into this world.

[2] Autobiography, Book xv.

CHAPTER XIII.

DRYING AFTER THE WRECK.

MAYENCE on the Rhine, the birthplace and home of Gutenberg, was a populous and important city, with a large garrison, a numerous resident nobility, and a château on every commanding site of the adjacent country. Here he remained three weeks, "drying his clothes wet in the shipwreck."

The polite inhabitants of the place and its neighborhood, princes, nobles, officers, ladies, hastened to offer him their homage, and console him for the indignities he had suffered. The King of Prussia was not lord paramount at Mayence, and the sympathies of the people had free play. He paid many visits in return. Several *fêtes* were given him in that festal season; his spirits revived, and he entered into the gayeties of the time with much of his wonted zest. Nor did he fail to do his regular five hours' daily work upon the Annals, for which the large collections of that ancient stronghold afforded material. In five weeks after leaving Frankfort, he finished his account of the important reign of Charles V., which fills a hundred printed pages of a large volume. "From court to court, from inn to inn," he wrote to his "incomparable duchess," "I have borne in mind that I was under orders to Madame the Duchess of Saxe-Gotha. I travel with books, as the heroines of romance traveled with diamonds and dirty linen." The work which *she* had commanded, he assured her, "made him forget all the Freytags." He said his present way of life reminded him of those knights-errant who passed from an enchanted palace to a cave, and then, all of a sudden, from the cave to an enchanted palace.

But he did not forget the Freytags; he never forgot them. The recollection of what he had suffered at Frankfort rankled within him all the longer because, as he often said, he had not an army of a hundred and fifty thousand men with which to

set himself right with the perpetrator. Like a defeated king, who cannot fight, he was now compelled to negotiate, and to reach his powerful foe by artifice. It was an alarming thought that "one word" from the King of Prussia could close France to him, perhaps forever; nay, the known anger of the king against him might suffice, without a word. As soon as he was settled in Mayence, and had spread his clothes upon the rocks to dry, he wrote one of those letters, so numerous in his correspondence, which were designed to be shown. It was addressed to Madame Denis, July 9th, two days after he had parted with her, and was doubtless intended to be lent to Lord Keith, Frederic's ambassador in France, with the expectation that he would send a copy to his king. This letter I give entire, by way of exhibiting the straits to which kings may be reduced who have no armies, and as a specimen of Voltaire's skill in roundabout diplomacy. Though designed to be shown, it was to be shown to persons acquainted with the facts, and it is, upon the whole, a moderate and just presentation of them: —

VOLTAIRE TO MADAME DENIS.

[Mayence, July 9, 1753.] "It is three or four years since I shed tears, and I felt sure that my old eyes would never know that weakness again before they were closed forever. Yesterday the secretary of the Count de Stadion found me bathed in tears; I wept both your departure and your stay. While you were with me the atrocity of what you suffered lost its horror; your patience and courage gave me patience and courage; but after your departure I have no longer been sustained.

"I believe it is a dream; I believe that all that passed in the time of Denys of Syracuse. I ask myself if it is really true that a lady of Paris, traveling with a passport of the king, her master, was drawn along the streets of Frankfort by soldiers, taken to prison without any form of accusation, without a *femme de chambre*, without a servant; having at her door four soldiers with fixed bayonets, and obliged to suffer a clerk of Freytag, a scoundrel of the lowest species, to pass the night alone in her chamber. When the woman Brinvilliers was arrested, the executioner was never alone with her; there is no example of an indecency so barbarous. And what was your crime? To have traveled two hundred leagues to conduct to the waters of Plombières a dying uncle whom you regarded as a father.

"It is very sad, doubtless, for the King of Prussia not yet to have

made reparation for that indignity committed in his name by a man who calls himself his minister. His treatment of me was bad enough: he had me arrested in order to recover his book of printed poems, which he had given me, and in which I had some rights, he left it with me as the pledge of his favor, and as the recompense of my pains. He wished to take back that gift; he had but to say one word. There was no occasion to imprison an old man going to take the waters. He could have remembered that, for more than fifteen years, he had courted me by his seducing favors; that in my old age he had drawn me from my country; that I had labored with him for two successive years in perfecting his talents; that I had served him well and failed him in nothing; and that, finally, it was far beneath his rank and glory to take part in an academical quarrel, and to end our connection with no other recompense than demanding his poems from me by soldiers. I hope that he will feel, sooner or later, that he has gone too far, that my enemy has deceived him, and that neither the author nor the king ought to cast so much bitterness upon the end of my life. He has taken counsel of his anger; he will take it of his reason and his goodness. But what will he do to repair the abominable outrage permitted in his name upon you? My Lord Maréchal [Keith] will doubtless be charged to make you forget, if it is possible, the horrors into which a Freytag plunged you.

"Some letters have been sent to me here for you, and there is one from Madame de Fontaine, which is not consoling. It is always maintained that I have been a *Prussian*. If it is meant by that that I responded by attachment and enthusiasm to those singular advances which the King of Prussia made me during fifteen successive years, they who call me Prussian are very right; but if it is meant that I have been his subject, and that I ceased one moment to be a Frenchman, they are deceived. The King of Prussia never pretended and never proposed it. He gave me the chamberlain's key only as a mark of favor, which he himself called frivolous in the verses which he composed for me when giving me that key and that cross, which I respectfully returned to him. That required neither oaths, nor duties, nor naturalization. A man does not become the subject of a king by wearing his order. M. de Couville, who is in Normandy, has still the chamberlain's key of the King of Prussia, which he wears like the cross of St. Louis.

"There would be much injustice in not regarding me as a Frenchman, since I have always kept my house at Paris, and have paid poll-tax there. Can it be seriously maintained that the author of the "Age of Louis XIV." is not French? Would any one dare to say it before the statues of Louis XIV. and Henry IV.? I shall even add, of Louis

XV., since I was the only Academician who pronounced his panegyric when he gave us peace, and I even translated that panegyric into six languages.

"It may be that his Prussian majesty, deceived by my enemy and by an impulse of anger, has irritated against me the king, my master; but all will yield to the justice and to the greatness of soul of the Prussian king. He will be the first to ask of the king, my master, that I may be allowed to end my days in my native land; he will remember that he has been my pupil, and that I bring away nothing from his kingdom except the honor of having enabled him to write better than myself. He will be contented with that superiority, and will be unwilling to avail himself of that which his rank gives him to overwhelm a foreigner who has sometimes taught him, who has always cherished and respected him. I know not how to impute to him the letters against me which are current under his name; he is too great and too high to outrage a private person in his letters; he knows too well how a king ought to write, and he knows the importance of observing the proprieties; above all, he was born to make known how becoming goodness and clemency are. That was the character of our good king, Henry IV.; he was quick in his anger, but he recovered. Ill-humor lasted with him only for moments, and humanity inspired all his life.

"Such, my dear child, are the sentiments which an uncle, or, rather, a sick father, dictates for his daughter. I shall be a little consoled if you arrive at Paris in good health. My compliments to your brother and sister. Adieu. May I die in your arms, unknown to men and to kings!"

It is probable that this letter reached its destination,— the King of Prussia. It did not soften him toward the writer. If kings surpass the rest of us in the power to bear with composure other men's pains, they have also an extreme susceptibility to pains of their own. Frederic never ceased to feel that, in all this coil with *messieurs les beaux esprits*, he was the magnanimous forgiver of injuries. With regard to the lady in the case, Madame Denis, whom Freytag arrested, as he said, for fear she should "spoil his affair," and get her uncle free, her sex was conclusive against her with the king. She was a woman; she was an impertinence and a bore. He never made her the least apology or reparation, and the mention of her name irritated him.

Madame Denis reached Paris in due time, and received her uncle's long epistle of July 9th. As it was not written to be

answered, she did not answer it. Six weeks after, however, worn out with ceaseless efforts to set her uncle right with the French court, in which she then deemed herself not unsuccessful, she wrote to him thus:—

"I have scarcely the strength to write to you, my dear uncle; I make an effort which I could make only for you. The universal indignation, the horror, and the pity which the atrocities at Frankfort have excited do not restore me to health. God grant that my former prediction that the King of Prussia would be the death of you be not fulfilled in myself! I have been bled four times in eight days. Most of the foreign ministers have sent to inquire about me; it seems as if they wished to repair the barbarity practiced at Frankfort. There is no one in France — I say, *no one*, without a single exception — who has not condemned that violence, mingled with so much ridicule and cruelty. It creates deeper impressions than you believe. My Lord Maréchal (Prussian minister in France) has killed himself in disavowing, at Versailles and everywhere else, all that passed at Frankfort. He has assured every one, on behalf of his master, that the king had no part in it. But see what the Sieur Frédersdorff writes to me from Potsdam, the 12th of this month: —

"'I declare that I have always honored M. de Voltaire as a father, being always ready to serve him. Everything that happened to you at Frankfort was done by order of the king. Finally, I wish that you may always enjoy prosperity without parallel.'

"Those who have seen this letter have been confounded. Every one says that you have no part to take but that which you are taking, — that of opposing philosophy to things so little philosophical. The public judges men without considering their rank, and before that tribunal you gain your cause. Both of us do very well to be silent; the public voice suffices us. All that I have suffered still increases my tenderness for you, and I should go to meet you at Strasbourg or at Plombières, if I could get out of my bed."

She was sadly mistaken in supposing that no one in France failed to condemn the Frankfort proceedings. When she wrote those words on the 26th of August, the French cabinet had already disposed of Voltaire's case. They had determined to sacrifice him to the King of Prussia's resentment. August 8, 1753, the Marquis d'Argenson, a member of the cabinet, made the following entry in his diary: "Permission to reënter France is refused to M. de Voltaire. It is sought by this little article to please the King of Prussia, while displeasing him, as we do, in the principal things."

The permission, as we see by the correspondence, was merely withheld, not refused; at least, for some months. Long he remained in doubt as to the intentions of the government, but dared not venture far across the border until he had received express permission, which did not come. For a year or two, it was the absorbing question with him whether he should be allowed to return to his house in Paris, or should be obliged to find an asylum elsewhere. Nothing, however, could depress him long, for he had found the philosopher's stone. "I have always had it for a maxim that occupation and labor are the only resource against misfortune." So he wrote to his Duchess of Saxe-Gotha about this time.

Three festive, consoling, laborious weeks he passed at Mayence. His clothes being well dried there, once more he resumed his journey toward Strasbourg. Before leaving Potsdam he had been invited by Charles-Theodore, the Elector-Palatine, to visit his dominions, and, accordingly, he next halted at the agreeable city of Mannheim on the Rhine, the capital of the Palatinate. Upon this part of his journey Collini gives us some interesting details, recorded only by him.

"We left Mayence for Mannheim on the 28th of July. Upon discovering the ruins, which still existed at that time in the Rhine Palatinate, at different points, where the French under Marshall Turenne had burned and ravaged, Voltaire cried out, 'It is impossible that our nation can be loved in this country; for these devastations must, without ceasing, recall the inhabitants to the hatred of the French name. My friend, let us give ourselves out here for Italians.' Accordingly, at Worms, where we slept, he pretended to be an Italian gentleman. The innkeeper, who spoke a little Italian, talked with him while we supped. Voltaire abandoned himself to his natural gayety, made the man believe a thousand singular things, and rendered the supper very diverting. He was no longer the Voltaire of Frankfort. His fertile imagination always came to his assistance, and softened the bitterness of his humiliations. Sixty years of persecution did not give him a single headache. His state of indisposition was a natural and permanent one, which accompanied him from the cradle to the coffin. The letters which he wrote to his friends always spoke of the maladies which overwhelmed him, and in this respect he deceived no one; nevertheless he lived on from day to day, forgetting his pains and his diseases in work, — a remedy known only to Voltaire, — and deceived unceasingly people who in society and in the

newspapers spoke of him as dying or dead. Those who judged him by the habits of the generality of men deceived themselves and deceived others. Voltaire in his working-room was not the Voltaire whom the public imagined.

"The next day, early in the morning, we arrived at Mannheim, then the residence of the Electors-Palatine. The court was still to be for some time at Schwetzingen, the country house of the sovereign. Voltaire, finding himself so near his native country, and secure from observation, spent some days in putting his affairs in order. He arranged his papers, and changed into French currency the money rescued from the Frankfort shipwreck. A Jew, who did not forget his own interest, negotiated this business.

"As soon as the Elector, Charles-Theodore, had learned the arrival at Mannheim of the illustrious voyager, he hastened to send one of his carriages to convey him to Schwetzingen. There he and all his suite were entertained, and he had no other table than that of the sovereign. This court was then one of the most brilliant in Germany; festivals followed festivals, and good taste gave them an agreeableness always new. Hunting, comic opera, French comedies, concerts by the first performers in Europe, made the electoral palace a delightful abode for strangers of distinction or merit, who, besides, found a welcome most cordial and flattering. I did not then foresee that one day I should be settled there, and become the manager of those festivals which I admired.

"All the actors of the French company came in a body to present their homage to the celebrated man who had extended their art by so many masterpieces. They asked permission to come to him for the purpose of taking lessons from him upon the spirit of their *rôles*, and upon declamation. Nothing could please him more than to be consulted upon matters relating to the theatre, and especially upon his own works. He gave instructions which worked a great change in the actors; his rooms at the palace became the temple of Melpomene.

"Of all the various pursuits to which he owed his glory and his dearest delights, the drama was the one which absorbed him most, and which had an ascendency over his mind which nothing could ever weaken. To science, to history, to theology, to romance, he gave only, as it were, some moments of caprice; while forty dramatic works attest the persistence of a true passion. He surrounded himself with everything that could nourish this passion. Individuals who showed talent for declamation, as well as those who made the theatre their profession, were received into his house with the esteem and regard due to merit. He did not share with his century that frightful prejudice which degraded and debased a man whose vocation it is to pro-

cure for us an amusement so proper and so full of charms that it has become a necessity to us.

"*Fêtes* and plays were not the only attractions of the electoral court. A nobler passion then occupied also the leisure of the sovereign of that beautiful country. Mannheim was the asylum of the sciences and the fine arts; learned men and artists were protected and encouraged there. Every day, after dinner, Charles-Theodore had a conversation in his cabinet with Voltaire, who read one of his works, and they conversed together upon literature. To give the elector an idea of his method in writing the 'Annals of the Empire,' he communicated to him the part of his manuscript which treated of the reign of Charles V.

"Charles-Theodore wished that Voltaire should visit, before leaving, the galleries and collections he had formed in the palace at Mannheim. A carriage conveyed him, and I went with him. He examined with attention the beautiful library of the elector, the gallery of pictures, that of the antiques, and the cabinet of medals. He beheld with astonishment all that this prince had done in so short a time for the progress of the sciences. It was on this occasion that he offered to the library the companion to that unfortunate book of poetry which he had been forced to give up at Frankfort, the title of which was 'Memoirs for the History of the House of Brandenbourg.'

"Voltaire passed fifteen days at Schwetzingen, fêted, sought after, and overwhelmed with attentions. When we set out from Schwetzingen, his highness made him promise to return as soon as he could. He kept that promise better than the one he had given Frederic. He returned five years after. We slept on the 15th of August at Rastadt, and the next day we arrived, by way of Kehl, at Strasbourg. We alighted at a little tavern bearing the sign of the White Bear.

"It was thought extraordinary that he should take lodgings at an inn little known, and situated in the worst quarter of the city, while there were at Strasbourg famous hotels, where rich travelers were accustomed to lodge. Suppositions and conjectures were not wanting upon this occasion; finally, after much discussion, people agreed that Voltaire was a miser. I confess that this tavern of the White Bear did contrast a little with his stately mode of traveling; but we shall now see how wrong it is to put faith in appearances, and how extremely careful we should be not to judge the actions of men upon simple conjectures. What passed for a proof of avarice was, in fact, only a consequence of the goodness of his heart. One of the waiters of the Emperor inn at Mayence had served us with extreme assiduity. His zeal and good manners gained him the favor of Voltaire. This waiter was from Strasbourg. He told us that his father kept in that city the

White Bear tavern, and entreated us to take lodgings at it. This attention of a son for the author of his being touched my illustrious traveling companion, and he promised what was asked of him. He hoped also, by stopping there, to get more customers for the inn.

"We had been some days at the White Bear when we made the acquaintance of M. Defresney, son of the postmistress of Alsace, a young man full of intellect and imagination. Voltaire greatly enjoyed his society, and they often talked together of the pleasure of living in the country. M. Defresney proposed to him to occupy a little house just out of the city, near the Jew's Gate, attached to which was a large vegetable garden. This little house belonged to Madame de Léon, who had given permission for Voltaire to occupy it. The offer was accepted, and we took possession August 21st.

"All that Strasbourg contained of persons distinguished by birth or talent, as well as all foreigners of mark, came to visit Voltaire in his modest hermitage, and he experienced in this half solitude a satisfaction which he had not felt in several years. He found himself once more upon French territory; those who crowded to visit him brought with them polite manners and the national tone. He was regarded everywhere as an illustrious fellow-citizen, the ornament and pride of his country. In Germany he was, if I dare so express myself, only an exotic Voltaire [*Voltaire forcé*], and the distinctions with which the great honored him in that country could not have for him the value and the charm which the esteem of his own countrymen possessed.

"He continued in this country-house the 'Annals of the Empire.' The Countess of Lutzelbourg lived in retirement at her château upon the isle of Jar, near our abode. He went sometimes to pass the evening there, which refreshed him after the most painful labor he ever undertook.

"The celebrated Schoepflin [German historian of great learning] was then living at Strasbourg, and Voltaire desired to consult upon the history of Germany a professor who had gained renown as a historian. He drew from him precious suggestions for his work. The author of the Annals proposed that he should read the work as far as it was written, and indicate his comments. Schoepflin, too much occupied with the duties of his professorship, could not accept the offer, and advised him to apply to Professor Lorentz. That professor undertook with pleasure the task of examining the manuscript, and of removing the errors which could not but disfigure the work, begun to please the Princess of Saxe-Gotha, and written rapidly amid the disorder and mishaps of our journey.

"Voltaire's plan now was to stop in Alsace until he had irrevocably fixed upon the place of his retreat; and that depended upon the news

which his niece might send him from Paris. She employed the influence of his friends in ascertaining the intentions of the king with regard to her uncle, and in procuring for him the privilege of living in peace in his own country. She loved him with the tenderest regard, and her desire was to live with him at the capital. She put forth the most zealous endeavors to succeed in this scheme; but she found many obstacles. Some scrupulous and timid souls dreaded the presence of Voltaire. The faction of the priests was the most envenomed and the most powerful. He received from her the exact detail of all that she did, and nothing yet announced that he could continue his journey toward the interior of France. Obliged thus to remain in Alsace, he decided to go and live for the present at Colmar. The brother of Professor Schoepflin had some printing-presses there, and he offered to print the 'Annals of the Empire,' now approaching completion. This offer was accepted, and we made at once our preparations for removal. October 2, 1753, we left Madame de Léon's house, and reached Colmar (forty-one miles distant) the same day. Voltaire hired a suite of rooms in the house of M. Goll.

"Colmar afforded him the advantage of having one of his works printed under his own eyes. He found in the persons composing the sovereign council of Alsace agreeable society and literary resources. Here, too, as well as at Strasbourg, he could conveniently receive and wait for the result of his niece's negotiations. As soon as we arrived, the Annals (Volume I.) were given to the printer. . . . . While waiting for the tidings that should fix his destiny, he took the resolution to set up housekeeping, which I was to direct. A young girl of Montbéliard, who spoke German and French, was our cook. Babet had some gayety, some natural liveliness of mind; she loved to talk, and had the art of amusing Voltaire. She paid him attentions, and had for him an attachment which servants do not ordinarily have for their masters. He treated her with kindness and cordiality. I often joked with Babet upon his ardor [*empressement*]. She would reply with a laugh, and pass on. Our way of life was peaceful and uniform. The great man whose companion I was had a feeling heart, an equal and tolerant mind, whose temper trouble could never sour. With such qualities, he maintained in his house domestic concord, a thing essential to the happiness of private life. Generally I played chess with him after dinner. Some friends, advocates, and counselors to the sovereign council of Alsace, formed his ordinary society."

This eventful and exciting journey of seven months restored his spirits and benefited his health. His fifteen days' stay at the electoral court revived his life-long love of the drama, which, as Collini truly says, was always his favorite pursuit.

The drama was in peculiar vogue at Mannheim, a city destined to furnish a home and congenial employment to the unborn Schiller, whose first play, "The Robbers," was to be originally presented at the Mannheim theatre. During Voltaire's visit, the Elector exhibited all the resources of his dramatic company. "He paid me the gallantry," wrote the poet to his guardian angel, "of having four of my pieces played. That reanimated my old *verve;* and I have set myself, dying as I am, to draw up a plan of a new piece ('Orphelin de la Chine'), all full of love. I am ashamed of it; it is the revery of an old fool." This play was an additional alleviation; for he could compose verses with delight when he could not get out of bed, and he could correct them as long as he could hold a pen.

CHAPTER XIV.

THREATENED ON EVERY SIDE.

He was settled, then, for the winter at ancient Colmar, in Alsace, a familiar province to him from of old. He had frequently traversed this region with "Emilie," and he still had a considerable sum of money invested there. Lunéville, the seat of King Stanislas, so fatal to her, was within a day's ride, and Cirey itself could be reached in two days. Colmar, at that time, was not a manufacturing town, the rivers near by not having yet been turned into water-power. It was then the law capital of that part of Alsace, the seat of its courts, the abode of its lawyers and judges. German was commonly spoken there; but French was the language of the educated and ruling classes. Voltaire chose the place for his temporary abode, not merely for the convenience of printing his Annals, but very much because he desired to consult the learned lawyers of Colmar upon the complex laws and ill-defined relations of that "Empire" whose history he was outlining.

For almost any other student of history in Europe Colmar would have been an agreeable and a safe retreat. To him what place on earth was safe? The Jesuits were powerful in Colmar; they were powerful as an order, and influential from the zeal and ability of some members. They had important establishments in and near the city, and expended a large revenue. Five years before, one of the Jesuit preachers closed a Sunday sermon with such a vigorous denunciation of Bayle's Dictionary, then in the lustre of a new and enlarged edition (six volumes instead of four), that seven men of Colmar brought out their Bayles that day into the public square and burnt them, along with several copies of D'Argens's "Jewish Letters." Voltaire had forgotten this, apparently, when he took up his abode at Colmar, and he was far from suspecting that he would be moved erelong to inform

the same D'Argens that the city was "half German, half French, and wholly Iroquois."

Foreseeing no molestation, he was soon immersed in his usual labors, — reading proof of his first volume, composing the second, writing articles for the Encyclopædia, sketching and rejecting plan after plan of his new tragedy, the "Orphan of China." D'Argental urged him to try once more his oft-tried expedient of putting between himself and his enemies another dramatic triumph; and never had there been such reason to make the public his friend as now, when he had no other friend that was strong. At other crises there had been a Prussia to retreat to, and a king to welcome him there. But now he was a sick, homeless old man, with a pen and a purse, against everything on the continent of Europe that wielded material power. He wooed with all the ardor of other days the happy inspiration which had given "Zaïre" to the stage, but not, at first, with much success. "My poor little genius," he wrote to D'Argental, in October, 1753, "can produce offspring no more. . . . . I have drawn up four plans, completely arranged, scene after scene; neither of them seemed to be tender enough. I threw them all into the fire." He succeeded better after further trials, and his Orphan grew under his hands. Articles for the Encyclopædia were better suited to the distraction of settling in a new abode. He wrote to D'Alembert in the same October: —

"I have obeyed your orders as well as I could; I have neither the time, nor the knowledge, nor the health, to work as I could wish. I offer you these essays only as materials for you to arrange according to your own judgment in the immortal edifice which you are raising. Add, retrench. I give you my pebbles to stick into some corner of the wall. . . . . It is grievous that philosophers should have to be theologians. Oh, try, when you get as far as the word THOUGHT, to say, at least, that the doctors know no more how they make thoughts than how they make children. Fail not, at the word RESURRECTION, to remember that St. Francis-Xavier raised from the dead eleven persons, by actual count. . . . . A thousand compliments to your colleague [Diderot]. Adieu, Atlas and Hercules, who carry the world upon your shoulders."

Several peaceful weeks passed in that modest abode which

Babet enlivened and Collini described. The first volume of the Annals was printed, and twelve copies of the same (two bound, ten in paper) were "laid at the feet" of the Duchess of Saxe-Gotha, "to serve for the education of Monseigneur her son, and to amuse the leisure of his august mother." The author told her he would have had them all bound, but for his "impatience" to send her this mark of his homage. She replied with something more than gracious words; she sent him a draft upon her bankers at Frankfort for a thousand louis d'or. He would not accept it; but it was difficult, at that time, for an author to refuse the gift of a princess without offense. He wrote her an exquisite letter, entreating her to cancel the draft. "Madame," said he, "should the granddaughter of Ernest the Pious wish by her generosity to make me fall into the sin of simony? Madame, it is not permitted to sell sacred things." He calls upon the chief lady of her court to intercede for him, that he might be allowed to labor for her without reward. "Speak firmly. Say boldly to the duchess that my heart, penetrated with the most tender gratitude, absolutely cannot accept her benefits." The duchess yielded to his entreaties, and sent him, as a memento of her gratitude, a silver ewer.

She rendered him the further service of insisting on the necessity of his conciliating the King of Prussia. She softened the heart of the king toward him, and prepared the way for their final reconciliation. In reply to her advice on this subject, he wrote, "I know that it is needful to conciliate a man who is powerful and dangerous. This could be done easily if all the wrong had been on my side; but he feels that he has behaved ill, and, in order to justify himself, he makes the measure run over. He pretends to impute to me that letter of 1752, which describes his private life, and which was published at Paris while I was at Berlin. He knows well, at the bottom of his heart, that that letter, in which I am myself maltreated, cannot be mine."

He went further. He sent a copy of his Annals to the King of Prussia, with a letter, in which he begged the king to believe that he was not the author of the scandalous letter just mentioned. Frederic politely acknowledged the gift, and remarked that it was "beautiful to see a man, who was capable of producing works of genius, occupying himself with works

of pure utility. He discoursed also of the unhappy breach between them with candor and freedom: —

"I have never believed that you were the author of the libels which have appeared. I am too familiar with your style and with your way of thinking to be so mistaken; and even though you were the author of them I should forgive you with all my heart. You ought to remember that when you came to Potsdam to take leave of me I assured you that I was willing to forget all that had passed, provided you would give me your word not to do anything more against Maupertuis. If you had held to what you then promised, I should have seen you return here with pleasure; you would have passed your life tranquilly with me, and, in ceasing to disturb your own repose, you would have been happy. But your residence at Leipsic renewed in my memory the recollections which I had desired to efface from it. I took it ill that, notwithstanding the promise you had given me, you did not cease to write against Maupertuis; and, not content with that, despite the protection which I accord, and am bound to accord, to my Academy, you wished to cover it with the same ridicule that you had so long labored to cast upon the president. These are the grievances I have against you; for, as to myself, personally, I have none. I shall always disapprove what you did against Maupertuis; but not the less shall I recognize your literary merit. I shall admire your talents, as I have always admired them. You honor humanity too much by your genius for me to be indifferent to your destiny. I could wish that you would free your mind of these disputes, which ought never to have occupied it, and that, restored to yourself, you would be, as you were formerly, the delight of whatever society you frequent. Upon this, I pray God to have you in his holy and worthy keeping."

This was not a soothing letter. If the King of Prussia exacted a promise from Voltaire not to tease a poor president any more, surely he was bound to keep the president from writing Voltaire a defiant letter, threatening him with personal violence, and making painful allusions to past experiences of the same nature. The king made no apology to Madame Denis, and spoke of "these disputes" in a manner most aggravating to one who deemed himself, and who really was, the defender of a deeply injured man of learning. "These disputes!" Voltaire frequently spoke in this light tone of Frederic's differences with his royal and imperial neighbors. We all regard in that way other people's disputes; but not so do we estimate our own august and sacred strifes. It was a

king, however, who wrote this letter, and Voltaire could not argue the matter with him. Moreover, he was relieved to be able to infer that it was not Frederic of Prussia who was opposing, or would oppose, his return to his native city.

The king hit upon a singularly happy expedient for setting himself right with the "philosophers" of Paris. It was during this spring of 1754 that he settled upon the worthy D'Alembert that pretty little pension of twelve hundred francs per annum, which exactly doubled the recipient's revenue. Madame du Hausset, *femme* to Pompadour, has recorded the scene which took place in madame's boudoir when the King of France told the story of this pension, and read the letter of Frederic to his ambassador in which his intention was communicated. Louis XV. entered the boudoir with the letter in his hand, and said in a mocking tone, —

"The King of Prussia is certainly a *great* man! He loves men of talent, and, like Louis XIV., desires to make Europe resound with his benefactions towards the learned of other countries."

Then, holding up the letter, and showing it to the persons present, he continued, "Here is a letter from him addressed to Lord Maréchal, ordering him to notify a *superior* man of my kingdom of a pension which he has accorded him. These are the king's words: —

"'You must know that there is a man in Paris of the greatest merit who does not enjoy a fortune proportioned to his talents and character. I could wish to serve as eyes to the blind goddess, and to repair, at least, some of her injustices: and for this reason I desire you to offer him the pension which I have named. I flatter myself that he will accept this pension in consideration of the pleasure it will afford me to oblige a man who, to loveliness of character, joins the sublimest qualities of mind!'"

Here the king stopped. Two other courtiers entered, and he began to read the letter over again, for their benefit, in the same style of mock admiration. When he had finished reading it, he said, "The letter comes to me from the minister for foreign affairs, with a petition that I permit this sublime genius to accept the pension. But how much do you suppose it amounts to?" Some guessed six, some eight, and some ten

thousand francs per annum. "You are mightily mistaken," said the king, with triumphant scorn. "*Twelve hundred francs!*" "That is certainly not much," said a courtier, "for sublime talents; but literary men will trumpet the benefaction throughout Europe, and the King of Prussia will have the pleasure of making a great deal of noise at a very little expense."

The *amount* of this pension, so derided by Louis XV., was, indeed, a very happy hit between the trifling and the oppressive. It was exactly suited to the circumstances and the character of D'Alembert; for who was D'Alembert?

On a certain day in November, 1717, a policeman, going his rounds in Paris, not far from the grand entrance to the cathedral of Notre Dame, found upon the steps of a chapel a basket with a new-born baby in it. The clothing of the child showed that it came from a wealthy house, and so, instead of taking it to the Foundling Asylum, he confided the little creature to a glazier's wife named Rousseau, whose husband's shop was near by. There was probably something in the basket which indicated the origin of the child; for in a few days the father, learning that the child had been abandoned, settled upon it an income for life of twelve hundred francs a year. The child grew up to be D'Alembert. Fortunately, the glazier's wife was one of the kindest of women, although entirely illiterate; and, loving this child with the affection of a mother, she took great care of it, and was indeed a true mother to it all the days of her life. When he had become a famous author, Madame de Tencin, a fine court lady, as well as a celebrated authoress, came forward and avowed herself his mother. He rejected her, saying, —

"You are only my step-mother. My nurse, the glazier's wife, — it is she who is my mother."

Upon leaving college his pension, small as it was, gave him the choice of his career, because it gave him the command of his time. Being alone in the world, having no relations who would acknowledge him, or whom he would acknowledge, he returned to his old home in the modest abode of the glazier's family. A powerful motive to this was the fact that the money which he could pay for his subsistence would add materially to their ease and comfort. In that family, in the same humble and inconvenient house, in a poor street, he continued to re-

side for forty years, living always with the same frugality and simplicity, and pursuing profound studies with an assiduity seldom equaled. His good old nurse appears never to have suspected that he was a great man. To her he was always the fragile, good boy who needed her care.

At a very early age his mathematical writings made him famous throughout Europe; and, indeed, he was but twenty-three when his essay upon the Integral Calculus caused him to be elected a member of the French Academy of Sciences. It was three years after this when the scene occurred in the boudoir of Madame de Pompadour which is related above. Frederic had founded the Berlin Academy of Science, which was accustomed to award medals of honor to any one who had published anything meritorious during the year. In 1746, the medal had been awarded to D'Alembert for his "Discourse on the General Theory of the Winds;" and this it was which led the king to make inquiries concerning the character and position of the author. Upon learning his way of life, his simple habits, his elevation above all the ordinary ambitions, and his residence with the friends of his childhood, the king conceived the fortunate idea of contributing a little to the ease of his circumstances, and he selected this favorable time for putting his scheme into execution. It was an act that enables us to forgive Freytag's exploits at Frankfort, and probably enabled Voltaire to forgive them sooner than he otherwise could.

The business of publishing books was then, as before remarked, mere brigandage, as we can easily believe who still daily witness the spoliation of authors through the absence of international law. Before the first volume of the "Annals of the Empire" had been a month in existence, three unauthorized editions were announced, against which neither author nor publisher had any defense or redress. The popularity of his "Age of Louis XIV." had whetted the appetite of publishers. There was nothing then in the trade that was a surer speculation than an historical work with the name of Voltaire on the title-page; and this circumstance now led to a premature and lawless publication that closed the gates of Paris against the author for twenty-four years.

The reader has been informed that Voltaire and "Emilie" studied history together at Cirey, and that the most important

result of their studies was a work, gradually evolved and published piecemeal, upon General History. At first it was so entitled, but was finally called "Essay upon the Manners [*Mœurs*] of the Nations," in six volumes, giving Voltaire's view of man and his past doings upon the earth. The part in which there was most of the Voltairean spirit was the Introduction, a volume by itself, and bearing the same relation to the rest as Buckle's Introduction was meant to bear to that impossible "History of Civilization" which the English author hoped to complete in the short compass of a man's life-time. Some chapters of this Introduction had appeared long ago in the "Mercure;" portions of the manuscript had been given and lent to individuals, — to the King of Prussia, to the Duchess of Saxe-Gotha, to the Elector-Palatine, and others; and the whole had been left with derelict Longchamp to copy. In January, 1754, when Madame Denis, Richelieu, D'Argental, and all the author's friends were setting in motion every engine of influence to smooth the way for his return home, a private edition of this bold, enlightened, humane, suggestive work appeared in Holland. Two editions were speedily published in Paris, and the work was thus in a few weeks spread all over Europe.

It was a terrible blow to the author. There was scarcely one page of the work that did not contain a fact, a conjecture, a truth, an error, a jest, a sentiment, a principle, useful to man, offensive to Boyer of Mirepoix. In vain the author strove to parry the blow; in vain he sought to excuse himself for having rendered this great service to man and truth. The edition of course swarmed with errors, some typographical, some of the pirate editor, some of the author's own; it contained also perilous words and passages which had been modified or omitted in later manuscripts. Acting upon this circumstance, he disavowed the work, and, having procured his latest manuscript from Paris, he went before notaries with it, exhibited the discrepancies, and procured a notarial certificate of a character, probably, without example: —

"Declaration concerning a book entitled 'An Abridgment of Universal History,' attributed to M. de Voltaire. Jean Néaulme, publisher. The Hague and Berlin. 1753.

"This day, February 22, 1754, was present before the undersigned

notaries M. François-Marie-Arouet de Voltaire, gentleman-in-ordinary of the king's chamber, member of the French Academy, of those of Rome, of Boulogne, of Tuscany, of England, of Scotland, and of Russia, who showed us a manuscript, in folio, much worn by use, rebound in boards, which also appeared very old, entitled 'Essays upon the Revolutions of the World, and upon the History of the Human Mind, from the Age of Charlemagne to our own Days, 1740;' which manuscript the Sieur appearing before us said he had received yesterday, the 21st of the present month, from his library at Paris, in a parcel countersigned *Bouret.*

"He showed us in like manner a printed work in two volumes, 12mo, entitled 'Abridgment of Universal History from Charlemagne to Charles V. By M. de Voltaire. The Hague. Jean Néaulme. 1753.' And we recognized that the said Abridgment was in part taken from the manuscript of the said Sieur, as exhibited to us, in this, that both begin in the same way: *Several indefatigable spirits having*, etc.

"We also perceived the very great difference between the said manuscripts and the said printed book, in the following particulars: —

"(1.) We found on the first page of the manuscript, line 3, *Historians resemble in this some tyrants of whom they speak: they sacrifice the human race to a single man.*

"And in the edition of Jean Néaulme we found, *Historians, like kings, sacrifice the human race to a single man.*

"Upon which the author declared that, at suitable time and place, he would institute proceedings against those who disfigured his work in a manner so odious.

"(2.) Page 59 of the manuscript: *The King of Persia had a son who, having turned Christian, proved unworthy to be one, and revolted against him.*

"In the edition of Jean Néaulme, the following essential words are maliciously suppressed: *Proved unworthy to be one.*

"(3.) Page 46 of the manuscript, at the article 'Mahomet:' *The ordinary Turk, who does not see those faults, adores them, and the imans have no trouble in convincing people of that which no one examines.*

"In the printed work was substituted: *The ordinary man, who does not see those faults, adores them, and the doctors employ a deluge of words to palliate them.* The ill-design of putting *doctors* in the place of *imans* appeared obvious to us.

"(4.) Page 65 of the manuscript: *It was impossible not to revere an almost uninterrupted succession of pontiffs who had consoled the church, extended religion, softened the manners of the Goths, Vandals, Lombards, and Franks.*

"All this passage, which contains more than two pages, is entirely forgotten in the Holland edition, etc., etc., etc., etc.

"On account of which the author complains of the ignorance, as well as of the bad faith, of him who sold to Jean Néaulme a manuscript so different from the true one.

"The author informed us that he expects immediately from Paris the second volume of his manuscript, which is as thick as the first, and which ends at the time of Philip II.; and thus his genuine work is eight times larger than that which has been published under his name. We also compared the manuscript of the first volume with the edition of Jean Néaulme, and we did not find a single page in which there are not great differences between them.

"And the sieur, appearing before us, protested against the edition which Jean Néaulme has presumed to publish wrongfully under his name, declaring it surreptitious, condemning it as filled with errors and faults, and worthy of the contempt of all readers."

He also addressed a public letter to the pirate publisher, of cutting moderation. "Your editor," said he, "has found the secret of debasing a work which might have become very useful. You have gained some money, upon which I felicitate you." But all was of no avail. The work was eagerly devoured; the hierarchy was deeply offended; and he was soon distinctly notified that he could not return to his home. The King of France, in the boudoir of his mistress, informed her that he "*did not wish Voltaire to come to Paris.*" She dared not interpose; she, the tolerated reprobate, could not make common cause with a reprobate not tolerated; and Madame Denis was duly informed of the king's remark. Voltaire still hoped to change the king's mind; but, at present, he was obliged to remain on the outermost edge of his country, uncertain whether even that poor privilege would be continued to him.

"As I have received no positive order from the king [he wrote to one of the ministers (Marquis de Paulmi, son of D'Argenson) February 20, 1754.], and as I do not know what he wishes, I flatter myself that it will be permitted me to carry my dying body where I please. The king has said to Madame de Pompadour that he does not wish me to go to Paris. I agree with his majesty; I do not wish to go to Paris, and I am persuaded that he will find it good for me to move about in the distance. I remit all to your goodness and your prudence, and if you deem it apropos to say a word on the subject to the

king at some opportune moment, and to speak of it as a simple thing which requires no permission, I shall be indebted to you for my life. I am satisfied that the king does not wish me to die in the Colmar hospital. In one word, I pray you to sound the indulgence of the king. It is most frightful to suffer all that I do for a bad book which is not mine. Deign to let me know if I can travel."

He might well be curious to know if he would be allowed to travel; for as soon as the Abridgment began to circulate in Colmar, cutting away the ground on which Jesuits and Jansenists equally stood, there was a movement among the Jesuits to expel him from the city. He knew how, by adroit appeals to Jesuit friends, to allay the rising storm; but the question was becoming serious: Whither could he go? Where could he live? What was to become of him?

For some time past, ever since his escape from Frankfort, he had had thoughts of abandoning Europe, and taking up his abode in the New World across the sea. Pennsylvania was then a name much honored in the circle of "philosophers," who had not forgotten the agreeable impressions left upon their minds by Voltaire's interviews with the English Quakers. He had since, as Thieriot mentions, begun a poem upon Philadelphia, and he rarely lost an opportunity of extolling the wisdom which welcomed to Pennsylvania men of every religion and of every sect; a policy that kept the broad Delaware alive with vessels laden with the stuff that great empires are made of,— men and women who practice virtue and use their minds. And now, to the lustre of this unique system of tolerance, was added a kind of glory little to be expected in a country only eighty years settled. It was in the summer of 1752 that Franklin flew his kite and brought down electricity from the thunder-cloud, — the crowning experiment of six years' ingenious, resolute investigation! Voltaire indulged a fancy of settling in this renowned province. "I will confide to you," wrote Thieriot to a friend in Martinique, "that, in 1753, Voltaire had the design to go and found an establishment in Philadelphia, which, from what I have heard of it, is worthy to be inhabited by philosophers." [1]

The dread of crossing the ocean deterred him; so, at least, he says in the article "Quakers," of the "Philosophical Dic-

[1] 2 Mémoires sur Voltaire, par Wagnière et Longchamp, 538.

tionary," where he also recalls some of the facts and fictions that attracted him to Pennsylvania at this time. The reader may smile when he reads his vision of Philadelphia, and remembers that it was written when the province was torn with dissensions of the utmost conceivable virulence; the placid Franklin himself, for the only time in his public life, blazing up into just wrath at the insensate pride of the sons of William Penn.

"Of all titles [wrote Voltaire] the one I like best is that of Philadelphian, *ami des frères*. . . . . I love the Quakers. Yes; if the sea did not cause me an insupportable sickness, it would be in thy bosom, O Pennsylvania, that I should finish the remainder of my career, if there is any remainder! Thou art situated at the fortieth degree, in a climate the most mild and favorable; thy fields are fertile, thy houses commodiously built, thy inhabitants industrious, thy manufactures esteemed. Unbroken peace reigns among thy citizens. Crimes are almost unknown, and there has been but a single example of a man banished from the country. He well deserved it: he was an Anglican priest, who, having turned Quaker, was unworthy to be one. This wretch was doubtless possessed of the devil; for he dared to preach intolerance. George Keith was his name; I know not where he has gone, but may all the intolerants go with him!

"So, of three hundred thousand people who live happily in Pennsylvania, there are two hundred thousand foreigners. For twelve guineas you can acquire a hundred acres, and within those hundred acres you are veritably king; for you are free, you are a citizen. You can do no harm to any one, and no one can do harm to you; you think what you please, and you say it without any one's persecuting you; the burden of imposts, continually doubled, you know not; you have no court to pay; you do not dread the insolence of a consequential subaltern."

This passage is doubtless a reminiscence of the time when he read Peter Kalm's account of the Quaker Arcadia, and sat in his Colmar lodgings wondering where he should spend the remainder of his days, "if there was any remainder." He would not have stayed long in Pennsylvania. He had soon after a taste of a genuine Quaker from Philadelphia, and could form an idea how suitable a city full of such would have been to the least Quakerly man in the world. Claude Gay was the name of this Philadelphian. Hearing Friend Claude's knowledge and simplicity highly spoken of, he desired to see him,

and the Quaker reluctantly accepted an invitation to dine at his house. Pleased at first by the tranquil dignity of his guest, he soon regarded his sobriety as a kind of challenge to sport. The American permitted him to laugh with the utmost coolness, and the conversation turned upon the first inhabitants of the earth and the patriarchs. Voltaire uttered some witticisms upon the historic books of the Bible. Claude Gay discussed the subject without betraying emotion. Irritated by his coolness, the "vivacity" of Voltaire turned into anger, and, at last, the Quaker, rising from the table, said to him, —

"Friend Voltaire, perhaps one day thou wilt understand these things better; meanwhile, find it good that I leave thee. God preserve thee, and, above all, direct thee."

Then he set out without regarding any excuse. Voltaire, ashamed, pretending pressing business, withdrew to his room. So runs the tale, and it is more probable than many of the Voltaire anecdotes.[1]

To return to Colmar. The bitterest drop in his cup during this period was a difference with his niece, Madame Denis, upon the subject of her expenditure of money in Paris. He could himself expend freely enough; but his liberality was that of a person who intends to retain the power to be liberal, while hers was the ordinary lavishness of a luxurious woman who is spending an uncle's money. She gave him hard words in return for his remonstrance. He objected, it appears, to her having helped herself to a sum of money which he had designed for another object, and he looked about for an agent in Paris who would transact his business there, as the Abbé Moussinot had done years before. How she resented this check upon her extravagance we learn from letters of Voltaire to D'Argental, written in March, 1754, — letters which show how serious and how critical his situation was at this moment.

"My dear and honored friend, I can but exhibit to you wounds which death alone can cure. Behold me exiled from Paris forever for a book which is certainly not mine in the state in which it appears, — for a book which I have reprobated and condemned so unequivocally. The declaration which I have had drawn up, seven

[1] Voltaire et Les Genevois, par J. Gaberel, page 20.

copies of which I sent to Madame Denis, will not reach the king, and I remain persecuted. This situation, aggravated by long maladies, ought not, I think, to be still further poisoned by the cruel abuse which my niece makes of my misfortunes. See the very words of her letter of February 20th: —

"'Trouble has perhaps turned your head; but can it spoil the heart? Avarice pierces you; you have only to speak. . . . . I took up the money at Lalen's only because I imagined every moment that you would return, and because it would have appeared too singular before the public that I should have left it all, especially as I had said, at court and in town, that you had doubled my revenue.'

"Then she half scratched out, *Avarice pierces you*, and substituted, *The love of money torments you.*

"She continues, 'Do not force me to hate you. You are the last of men in point of heart. I shall conceal the vices of your heart as I can.'

"Such are the letters which I have received from a niece for whom I have done all that I could do; for whom, as much as for you, I returned to France, and whom I treat as my daughter.

"She intimates to me, in her unworthy letters, that you are as angry with me as she is herself. And what is my fault? To have asked you both to unearth for me some agent, wise, intelligent, who could serve for her and for me. Forgive me, I entreat you, if I pour into your generous bosom my complaints and my tears. If I have been in the wrong, tell me so; I submit my conduct to you; it is from a friend like you that we ought to ask reproof when we have committed faults. Let Madame Denis show you all my letters; you will see in them only the excess of affection, the fear not to do enough for her, a confidence without limit, the desire to arrange my property in her favor in case I am forced to fly and my revenues are confiscated (a thing possible, and one which I have had reason given me to apprehend), an entire sacrifice of my own happiness to her happiness, to her health, to her tastes. She loves Paris; she is accustomed to have company at her house; her health has rendered Paris still more necessary to her. I have for my share solitude, misfortune, suffering; and I took comfort in the idea that she would remain in Paris, with a fortune sufficiently ample, which I assured to her, — a fortune much greater than that which I inherited from my father. Finally, my adorable friend, condemn me if I am wrong. I confess to you that I have need of a little patience; it is hard to be treated so by a person who was so dear to me. You and she alone remained to me, and I endured my misfortunes with courage, upheld by those two supports. You will not abandon me; you will preserve me a friendship with which you honored me when we were children together. Adieu, my

dear angel. I have allayed entirely the persecutions which fanaticism was about to excite against me, even in Colmar, with regard to that pretended Universal History; but I should have preferred excommunication to experiencing the injustice which a niece who stood to me as a daughter has added to my misfortunes."

This friend of fifty years wrote a letter of warm and tender consolation, by which Voltaire was greatly comforted. In his response, the beleaguered author gave a clearer view of his situation after forty years of toil in his vocation. He had learned from friends at court that the king had read the passage in the "pretended Universal History," in which kings were said to sacrifice the human race to the caprice of an individual.

"The king has read the passage [he continued], and that is enough. The passage is criminal; he has reason to be very much irritated by it; and he has not the time to read the incontestable proofs that it was falsified. There are fatal impressions which can never be obliterated; and all concurs to prove to me that I am lost without resource. I have made myself an irreconcilable enemy of the King of Prussia by wishing to leave him; the pretended Universal History has drawn upon me the implacable wrath of the clergy. The king cannot know my innocence, and hence it has come to pass that I have returned to France only to be exposed to a persecution that will outlast my life. Such is my situation, my dear angel, and I must not indulge in illusions with regard to it. I feel that I should have much courage if I had health; but the sufferings of the body lower the tone of the soul, especially when the exhaustion is such as not to permit the alleviation of labor. . . . . It is in such a case that a family can serve as some resource, and that resource is taken from me.

"If I should seek an unknown asylum, and if I could find one, if it was believed that that asylum was in a foreign country, and if my seeking such a refuge was regarded as an act of disobedience, it is certain that my revenues would be seized. Who would prevent it? I have written to Madame de Pompadour, and I have told her that, having received no positive order from his majesty, — having returned to France only to go to Plombières, — my health growing worse, and having need of another climate, I trusted it would be permitted to me to complete my journey. I added that, as she had little time to write, I should take her silence for a permission to do so."

These letters suffice to present the material facts of his position at this time. Madame Denis did not long delay to reconcile herself with her uncle, to whom she was bound by interest

as well as by affection. Nor was the King of Prussia an active or a persistent enemy. The really serious danger was from Paris, where his enemies, numerous and powerful, needed but a scrap of writing and the king's signature to divert his annuities into the royal treasury. Bonds of the city of Paris yielded him 14,000 francs a year; Richelieu paid him an annuity of 4,000 francs, the Duke of Bouillon 3,250, his pensions amounted to more than 4,000. The income of which a fiat of the King of France could instantly and forever deprive him exceeded 60,000 francs per annum. It was much for a man of sixty to lose who had kings and hierarchies to contend with, and the proceeds of whose labor were a prey to every man in Europe who had a printing-press.

Marmontel, who then held an office at Versailles under Madame de Pompadour's brother, and lived in intimacy with her circle, testifies that she desired to end Voltaire's exile, but dared not interfere. "She interested herself for him; she sometimes inquired of me about him; and when I answered that it depended only on her to make her inquiries unnecessary she said, with a sigh, 'Ah, no; it does not depend on me.'" [1]

[1] 2 Memoirs of Marmontel, 58. London, 1806.

CHAPTER XV.

HIS EXCLUSION FROM FRANCE.

In this extremity he resorted to an expedient which carried belligerent rights to an extreme. Easy-going Catholics, who neglect the rites of their church during the rest of the year, are accustomed to confess and commune at Easter, and this concession suffices to keep them within the pale of the church. They who confess and commune at Easter may call themselves Catholics; they who omit to do so are reprobate. Hence, millions of non-religious Catholics, among whom were many unbelievers, conformed to this usage, the disregard of which would have subjected them to loss, inconvenience, or danger. Dissolute noblemen, like the Duke of Richelieu, would comply with the custom as an example, and because it was instinctive in feudal chiefs to ally themselves with the preachers of unreasoning obedience. Voltaire this year at Colmar resolved to comply also, and he executed his purpose with deliberation and completeness. Secretary Collini, to whom we are indebted for nearly all our knowledge of this event, informs us that he was moved thereto by the advice of friends in Paris; but, probably, he was not unwilling, while endeavoring to deprive his enemies of a weapon against him, to afford the world this signal proof of his contempt for what he esteemed barbaric rites.

"Madame Denis [says Collini] notified her uncle that watchful eyes were upon him from Versailles, that he had been followed everywhere since his departure from Brandenbourg, that he was even closely observed on that frontier of France where he then was, and that he was regarded as an infected member of the flock, capable of communicating contagion wherever he should go. Some ministers of the altar took charitable pains to foment those fears. The question was to find a way of dissipating them.

"It was in the month of April; Easter was approaching. Spies

were already posted to see if Voltaire would fulfill at this festival the duties imposed by the church. His Paris friends were informed of the test by which he was to be judged, — a test more apt to lead a man to hypocrisy and profanation than to make a good Catholic of him. They made him aware of it, and persuaded him to yield to the necessity. They saw in this step an expedient to calm agitation, and obtain permission for him to return to the capital.

"Voltaire asked me one day if I was going to confess and receive the sacrament at Easter. I replied that such was my intention. 'Very well,' said he to me, 'we will do so together.' Everything was prepared for this ceremony. A Capuchin came to visit him; I was in his room when this monk arrived. After the first words I disappeared, and did not return till I learned that the Capuchin was gone. The next day we went to church together, and communed side by side.

"I confess that I profited by so rare an occasion to examine the countenance of Voltaire during this important act. God will pardon me this curiosity and my distraction; I was none the less devout for it. At the moment when he was about to receive the sacrament, I raised my eyes to heaven, as if in devotion, and I cast a sudden glance on Voltaire's face. He presented his tongue, and fixed his eyes wide open upon the physiognomy of the priest. I knew those looks of his. On returning home, he sent to the convent of the Capuchins a dozen bottles of good wine and a loin of veal. On this occasion it was said at Paris that Voltaire had taken his first communion at Colmar."

Just comment upon this painful scene is, happily, as needless as it would be difficult; for scarcely any reader would accept another person's judgment upon it unless it accorded with his own. A countless multitude of virtuous and charitably disposed persons would instantly condemn it as a crime of immeasurable enormity; while others, not less virtuous and amiable, see in it merely an amusing device of a philosopher cornered by a band of "Iroquois," furious to bind and burn him by a slow fire. Between those extremes every one who considers the matter will find ample standing-room.

It concerns us, however, to know what Voltaire himself thought of it. He thought it just as allowable an act as that of a farmer who lies to a furious bull by setting up in a field a stick with a hat and coat upon it. "I conceive," he wrote to D'Argens, a few days before, "that a devil goes to mass when he is on papal ground like Nancy and Colmar." On

another occasion he wrote to his "angels," "If I had a hundred thousand men, I know well what I should do; but as I have them not, I shall commune at Easter, and you shall call me a hypocrite as much as you please." And still later he wrote to D'Alembert, "What ought wise men to do when they are surrounded by insensate barbarians? There are times when it is necessary to imitate their contortions and speak their language. *Mutemus clypeos.*[1] For the rest, what I have done this year I have done several times before, and, if it pleases God, I shall do it again. There are people who are afraid to handle spiders; there are others who swallow them."

On this point his last secretary, Wagnière, has an anecdote. "What would you have done if you had been born in Spain?" Wagnière asked him one day. His reply was, "I would have gone to mass every day; I would have kissed the sleeve of the monks; and I would have tried to set fire to all their convents. I was not made to live in Spain, nor even in France." "And where, then?" asked Wagnière. "In England," was the reply.

At another time he expressed himself, if possible, still more plainly. Writing to the Marquis de Villevielle, he said, "When one is shut up between foxes and wolves, it is sometimes necessary to smoke out the foxes and howl with the wolves. There are things so contemptible that one can sometimes abase himself to them without compromise. If ever you should find yourself in a company where every one *montre son cul*, I advise you *mettre chausses bas* on entering, instead of making a bow."

So far as we can discern, this act had no results of any kind. It deceived no one; it was expected to deceive no one. Paris remained closed to him, and, if he had permission to go to Plombières, it was only that silent permission which he had sought from the king's mistress. Nor ought the reader to infer from his letters to D'Argental and from this compliance with the Easter customs of his country that he was dismayed or habitually dejected by the situation of his affairs. A man so absorbed as he was in a pursuit the most fascinating mortals know cannot be long cast down. The publication of part of his General History, and the rapturous welcome it re-

[1] 2 Æneid, V. 389.

ceived, revived his interest in the work, and he laid out the extensive scheme which resulted in the most voluminous and suggestive of all his prose writings. He saw an abundance of congenial work before him ; he was the farthest possible from despair. Many of his letters of this spring are full of gayety and point, particularly those which he wrote to the Marquise du Deffand, upon whom had recently fallen, at the age of fifty-seven, the great affliction of blindness. He sent many a letter of badinage, anecdote, and criticism to amuse and cheer her. April 13th, a few days after the Easter communion, he wrote to her in his liveliest manner : —

" I think I advised you to go on living, if only to enrage those who pay your annuities. For my part, it is almost the only pleasure left me. As soon as I feel the symptoms of an indigestion, I say to myself, *Three or four princes will gain by my death.* Then I take courage from pure malice, and I conspire against them with rhubarb and sobriety."

They had both known Lord Bolingbroke in their earlier years, and he touches in the same letter upon the Memoirs of that disappointing " philosopher," just published : —

" I have read the Memoirs of my Lord Bolingbroke. It seems to me that he spoke better than he wrote. I confess to you that I find as much obscurity in his style as in his conduct. He draws a frightful portrait of the Earl of Oxford, without bringing against him the least proof. It was that same Oxford whom Pope styles a soul serene, above good and evil fortune, above the rage of parties, the lust of power, and the fear of death.

" Bolingbroke would have better employed his leisure in composing good memoirs upon the war of the succession, upon the peace of Utrecht, upon the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough, upon Louis XIV., upon the Duke of Orleans, upon the ministers of France and of England. He should have adroitly mingled his apology with all those grand subjects, and he would have immortalized it ; instead of which, it is annihilated in the mutilated and confused little book which he has left us.

" I do not conceive how a man who had views so great could do things so little. His translator is exceedingly wrong in saying that I wish to proscribe the study of facts. I reproach M. de Bolingbroke with having given us too few of them, and with having strangled the few events of which he speaks. Nevertheless, I believe that his Memoirs have given you some pleasure, and that in reading them you have often found yourself on familiar ground.

"Adieu, madame; let us suffer our human miseries patiently. Courage is good for something: it flatters self-love, it diminishes evils; but it does not restore sight to the eyes. I always greatly pity you; your destiny afflicts me."

Colmar continued to be his abode for thirteen months, during which he made some excursions from it. In the pleasant month of June, after this long winter of his discontent, he set out for Plombières, expecting to meet at that famous watering-place among the Vosges Mountains both his nieces and both his angels. Just as he was leaving Colmar, he received a note from Madame Denis informing him that Maupertuis was also going to Plombières, and that he must wait till the president had left the place, for fear of affording "an odious and ridiculous scene" to the idle water-drinkers. He started, notwithstanding, but halted half-way at the Abbey of Sénones, where his old friend, Dom Calmet still lived and labored among the twelve thousand volumes of the convent library. He spent three weeks at the abbey in friendly intercourse with the fathers, and in searching for historic truth among their books; not neglecting to correct the proofs of the second volume of his Annals, which Collini sent twice a week from Colmar. "I do not lose my time here," he wrote from the abbey to D'Argental. "Condemned to labor seriously at this General History, printed to my injury, editions of which are multiplied daily, I could scarcely find greater assistance than in the Abbey of Sénones. . . . . Do you know that I am not in France, Sénones being territory of the empire, and that I depend only upon the Pope for the spiritual? I read here, an 't please you, the Fathers and the Councils."

The secretary, we perceive, remained at Colmar to superintend the printing; and there was an active interchange of notes, proofs, messages, and parcels between them. It was no child's play to be secretary to such an author, even with a copyist to assist; and poor Collini was sometimes at the end of his patience. Voltaire, he tells us, was a bad proof-reader; but he kept his secretary up to the desired degree of vigilance by incessant reminders and admonition. He rained notes upon him, half in French, half in English, half fun, half earnest, always keeping the tone of a friend who asks a favor, never obtruding the master. These sentences may give an idea of them:—

[June 9th.] "As I pass through Saint-Dié, I correct the page; I return it; I recommend to M. Collini the *lacunes* of Venice; he will have the goodness to have a *g* put, instead of the *c*. And those chevaliers who leave *son pays*,— one can of a *son* easily make a *leur*."

[June 7th.] "I must make you wait for the preface. . . . . I have much at heart the copying of the manuscript of the history" [of Louis XV].

[June 23d.] "Have the two essential faults in the body of the work been corrected by hand? How goes the copy of the manuscript?"

[June 24th.] "I have at last received the large parcel. I retain the half leaf, or, rather, the whole printed leaf. I have found no mistakes, except my own; you correct proof better than I; correct the rest, then, without interference from me."

[June 26th.] "I pray you take the key of the closet in which there are some books. This closet is behind the bureau in the study, and the key of that closet is in one of the right-hand drawers of the bureau. You will find in it three copies of the "Age of Louis XIV." and of the Supplement, stitched in paper. I beg you to make a parcel of them, with this address: '*To Dom Pelletier, curate* of Sénones,' and give the parcel to the bearer. I embrace you."

[July 2d.] "In reply to yours of June 25th, I will say that I am not at all pressed or uneasy with regard to the copy you are doing; but I shall be very glad to find it finished on my return a month hence."

In these notes we see him managing and directing the whole business of publishing books: first, writing them; then, printing, binding, dedicating, distributing copies to powerful protectors; securing the good-will of ministers and censors; settling how many days it was best to send out presentation copies in advance, so as to enhance the compliment without running needless risk of a pirated edition; and, in short, arranging every detail with the prudence and assiduity of a man whose subsistence and chance of fortune depended upon the success of his enterprise. These labors were scarcely ever suspended for a whole day; for we find him correcting proofs in his carriage while the horses were changing, and availing himself of every chance detention to carry on some part of his work. Maupertuis bars the way to Plombières; Voltaire steps aside to this Abbey of Sénones, where still the work goes on, and he has the pleasure, as he remarks, of "living upon the enemy," while forging new weapons to destroy him. Nothing could happen which he did not, sooner or later, turn to the ad-

vantage of his object. If he is sick, he can look over tedious volumes to see if they contain anything he wants; if he is pestered by Freytags, he can dictate catalogues of dates and names; if he is vigorous and buoyant, he can recast a scene of tragedy; if he is dispirited, he finds solace in "La Pucelle."

President Maupertuis at length took his departure from Plombières, and the good Doctor Akakia joyfully obeyed the summons to join his nieces and his angels. Three weeks of great happiness passed too rapidly away. Madame Denis and her uncle were better friends than ever; she consented to forsake all, even the charms of Paris, to share whatever asylum he might find for his declining years. She returned to Colmar with him, and ever after remained the mistress of his house.

Soon after his return to Colmar he had another paroxysm of alarm respecting that terrible "Pucelle" of his, of whom his princesses and duchesses were so enamored. Again there were rumors that the work was about to escape from secret recesses in ladies' boudoirs into the awful publicity of print. The poem could scarcely be more public than it was already; for it had been copied and recopied so industriously that manuscripts had been sold in Paris for as little as one louis d'or; and it was thought in 1754 that the copies and parts of copies then afloat numbered several hundreds. But it was not yet in print. A printed "Pucelle" was an indecorum; and, in the *régime* of the period, almost anything was permitted except an indecorum. His fright proved to be premature. But the time, he thought, could not be distant when a publisher would risk printing a work which so many desired to possess. "It is a bomb," he wrote in August, 1754, "which, sooner or later, will burst to crush me, and tragedies will not save me. I shall live and die the victim of my labors."

An agreeable event occurred in October. The favorite sister of Frederic of Prussia, the Margravine of Bayreuth, visited Colmar with her husband. They invited him to their hotel, and both of them strove by assiduous attentions to atone for Freytag and Frankfort. He hastened to communicate the pleasing news to the Duchess of Saxe-Gotha, to whom, perhaps, he owed this concession from the Prussian king: —

"Who was surprised on the 23d of this month? It was myself, madame, when a gentleman of the suite of Madame the Margravine of Bayreuth came to say to me that his august mistress expected me to supper at the Black Mountain, a poor tavern of the city. I rubbed my eyes; I believed it was a dream. I go to the Black Mountain; I find there the margrave and her royal highness. There are no kinds of attention which they do not heap upon me; they wish to take me to the banks of the Rhone, where they are going to pass the winter. The margravine absolutely wished to see my niece. 'Yes, madame,' said I to her, 'she will have the honor boldly to present herself before you, although you are the King of Prussia's sister.' All went off in the best way in the world; the sister did what the brother ought to have done; she excused as well as she could, and with infinite goodness, the adventure at Frankfort."

One more journey he was to perform this year. His friend and "protector" of forty years, the Duke of Richelieu, who had estates and a château near Lyons, urged him to visit that busy city on the Rhone, and engaged to meet him there. The distance from Colmar to Lyons is about two hundred miles, and the season was late for travel; but it was highly desirable for the gentleman-in-ordinary of the king's chamber to consult with the first gentleman of the same upon his precise standing at court, and to learn what chance there was of his living unmolested in France. November 11, 1754, the traveling carriage, which we have accompanied all the way from Potsdam, stood at the door of Madame Goll's house in Colmar, loaded as heavily as the great coach of Madame du Châtelet used to be when she rode from Paris to Cirey. Madame Denis was going, Collini was going, the copyist and the valet were going. The horses were harnessed, the vehicle was about to start, when one of those "vivacities" occurred which occasionally disturbed for a moment the tranquillity of this household. It is the secretary who tells the story: —

"The carriage seemed to the philosopher to be too heavily loaded, and he ordered that everything should be forthwith taken off, and nothing left except his own trunk and that of his niece. I carried with me only a small portmanteau, in which I had a dozen shirts and some necessary clothes. He sent word to me to sell the whole. The

proposition was that of a madman, and I went to him and said that his extravagances were insupportable, that I asked my discharge, and that I begged him to arrange my account. 'I am sorry,' said he, 'that you wish to leave me, and, as to our account, I owe you nineteen livres. Here they are,' and he put a louis into my hand. 'Monsieur,' said I, looking at the coin, 'I will send you your change of a hundred sous.' 'No, no,' said he. 'I ask pardon,' replied I; 'five livres are due to you.' 'I beg you,' said he, 'accept this trifle.'

"The opportunity appeared to me too good, and I declined it, protesting that he had been too generous toward me. I immediately left his room. His niece was near him; she appeared to speak a word to him; and, as I was about to enter the chamber which I had occupied in Madame Goll's house, I saw the philosopher running after me. 'Wait,' said he to me; 'as I do not know whether you have any money, nor what is to become of you, take this trifle also.' 'Monsieur,' replied I, 'I am not the least anxious as to what will become of me, and never have been with regard to money.' Nevertheless, he induced me to take the other louis d'or, and I thanked him for his generosity. He returned to his room. At the end of a quarter of an hour, one of the servants came to tell me that uncle and niece were talking of this adventure, which they feared would make some noise. I had scarcely heard this, when I saw the philosopher appear in my chamber. He induced me to repack my portmanteau, and to set out with them."[1]

Peace being thus restored, the party rolled away from Colmar, and had an unusually merry journey of four days to Lyons, Voltaire being in exuberant humor after this momentary effervescence. Lyons, already the chief seat of French manufactures, was even then a very large city. The poet Gray, who visited it a few years before, describes it as the "second city of the kingdom in bigness and rank; its streets excessively narrow and nasty, the houses immensely high and large (twenty-five rooms on a floor and five stories high), and swarming with inhabitants, like Paris itself." "The people," he adds, "were too much engrossed in business to care much for their own or others' diversion." But this was in 1739. Voltaire had been incessantly employed ever since in awakening and nourishing the intellect of France, and Lyons now had its academy, its literary circles, its liberally-sustained theatre, its intellectual life.

Here Voltaire met his "hero," as he was accustomed to

[1] Lettres Inédites de Voltaire, de Madame Denis, et de Collini, page 174.

style the Duke of Richelieu, and passed five days in his society; after which he entered freely and gayly into the intellectual activities of the most intellectual of provincial cities. It now plainly appeared that the Court and the Mind of this beautiful kingdom of France were growing apart. Everything at Lyons which looked to the court for advantage eyed this portentous visitor askance, and treated him coolly; but, as often as he stood face to face with the public, he was welcomed with enthusiastic and apparently unanimous applause. Invited to a session of the Academy, he was received with every mark of distinction. Plays of his were produced at the theatre with boundless success, and when the author was seen in a box, the audience rose and gave him cheer upon cheer. His drawing-room reminded Collini of the time when, at Potsdam, princes, generals, and ambassadors crowded his antechamber. But when, attired in a court suit, and accompanied by his secretary, he rode in state to the levee of Cardinal de Tencin, Archbishop of Lyons (and uncle to his beloved angel, Count d'Argental), he had a very different reception. –

"We traversed," says Collini, "a long series of rooms. His gout having weakened him, I gave him my arm to sustain him, and at last we reached Monseigneur's antechamber, which was full of courtiers of every kind. Voltaire is announced to the cardinal. He enters alone. A moment after, he comes out, takes my arm again, and we return as fast as we can to the carriage, without either of us uttering a word. 'A pleasant visit!' said I to myself. When we were in the carriage, Voltaire, a little absent-minded, addressed to me these words: 'My friend, this country was not made for me.' Soon after, he told me his excellency had said to him that he could not invite him to dinner, because he was out of favor at court; and upon hearing this phrase, so ridiculous and so worthy of a slave, he had turned his back to the prelate and left the room. He was received in much the same way by the officer in command of the troops at Lyons."

Voltaire himself confirms this narrative. "The cardinal," he says, "avowed to me in confidence that he could not invite me to one of his public dinners, because the King of France was angry with me. I told him I never dined; and as to kings, I was the man in the world who most easily took my

part with them, and as to cardinals, not less so." The Margravine of Bayreuth was then in Lyons, and, through her good offices, the cardinal received him a second time with the cordiality of other days.

It was, however, but too evident that he could be safe at present on no part of the territory of France, and the Duke of Richelieu was obliged to admit it. At Lyons, too, he had another panic about the "Pucelle," the burlesque which the same Richelieu had suggested to him at the supper-table a quarter of a century before. Some of the copies in circulation contained abominable things, inserted by unskilled hands to fill gaps in the work; and when an unskilled hand presumes to employ itself in composition of that kind the product differs from that of the master as Madame la Marquise de Pompadour differed from a painted woman of the streets. There were, moreover, in France, many parents who cared little for questions of theology, but knew that the passions of youth are ardent, and that no possible version of this poem was good for their sons and daughters to read. Manuscripts of the "Pucelle" for a louis d'or! That appears to have turned the scale against him, since it gave to the government the support of a public opinion not artificially produced. To such persons as the Duchess of Saxe-Gotha and the Margravine of Bayreuth literature of that kind was a kind of fire which they could play with without immediate and deadly peril; but the class who are obliged to earn the subsistence of those sumptuous persons, as well as their own, must live and labor in some harmony with the nature of things.

December 10, 1754, after a residence of four weeks at Lyons, Voltaire and his party left that city, and journeying slowly toward the north, along the banks of the Rhone, with the Alps often in sight, reached Geneva, ninety-three miles distant, on the third day. It was in Switzerland that he sought an asylum, as the King of Prussia had predicted.

CHAPTER XVI.

TO SWITZERLAND.

VOLTAIRE, as Thieriot assures us, had meditated emigrating to Protestant America. Geneva, at that period, was a small America in the midst of Europe. He had reached an America without crossing the sea; for, surely, communities which are alike in religion and in politics, though an ocean rolls between them, are not far apart. The Swiss city, with its few leagues of adjacent country, was about as much an independent republic as one of the American colonies; and, as to its religion, a traveler from Calvinistic Boston says, "You would know the people of Geneva were Calvinists, whisking through the town merely in a *diligence*." [1]

The son of a Calvinist wrote these words as recently as 1833, nearly three centuries after Calvin had put his ineffaceable stamp upon the French refugees in the Swiss town. The dress, the faces, the manners, of the people all reminded this observing Bostonian of his native land. He noticed a certain "subdued decency," a "black-coated, straight-haired, saint-like kind of look, which is universal in the small towns of our country, and which is as unlike France and Italy as a play-house is unlike a Methodist chapel."

On the other hand, Geneva presented from of old the better characteristics of New England, among which were two of some value, namely, the generel diffusion of knowledge and the general absence of degrading poverty. The poet Gray visited the city some years before Voltaire saw it, and he approached it by the Lyons road, as Voltaire did. He also records his impressions. Near the gates of Geneva rushes into the blue Rhone the little river Arne, separating it from Sardinia. On the Sardinian side of the torrent, according to the poet, nothing was to be seen but "meagre, ragged, barefooted peasants,

[1] Pencillings by the Way, by N. P. Willis. Letter 112.

with their children, in extreme misery and nastiness; and even of these no great numbers." But no sooner had he crossed the narrow Arne than the whole aspect of human life changed: "poverty no more; not a beggar, hardly a discontented face, to be seen; numerous and well-dressed people swarming on the ramparts; drums beating; soldiers, well dressed and armed, exercising; and folks, with business in their looks, hurrying to and fro."[1]

Calvin ruled the republic of Geneva, of a hundred and nine square miles and twenty thousand inhabitants, very much as the Puritan clergymen ruled Boston; and both communities enjoyed, in consequence, a safe, continuous abundance, which industrious people can always enjoy who repress their expensive tastes, or wisely indulge them in common. Most of his legislation tended to economize vital force. The objection to his system was that it so completely deprived its subjects of reasonable liberty that a reaction from it was inevitable; and the reaction from Calvinism is among the most deplorable known to civilized beings, because Calvinism contains so much good and truth essential to human welfare.

Pastor Gaberel, whose little book upon Voltaire's residence among his people is familiar to travelers, describes the old Calvinistic government as Spartan rigor enforcing Christian morals. Calvin, he observes, *forced* every person to be a Christian of the straitest sect. His sumptuary laws necessitated a system of surveillance far more corrupting than the vices it detected. Furniture, food, clothing, diversions, scale of living, expenditure, were regulated by law. The whole people were compelled, under penalty of fine, to rise in the winter at six, and in the summer at four.

"Our ancestors," says M. Gaberel, "seem to have been much less sensitive to cold than their descendants, since a single fire served for each house, whatever the season, and that in the kitchen; scarcely a pan of coals being ever seen in the family room of the wealthiest houses. There was little furniture except of common wood. Windows closely fitting were regarded as real luxuries, and people cared little for the large apertures which gave admission to the chill mountain wind. A severe frugality was maintained at table, — a frugality which

[1] Gray to his father, October, 1739.

survived the shipwreck of the customs of the Reformation; for the law required that the people should not have upon their tables, on ordinary days, more than two dishes, — one of meat, one of vegetables, without pastry. The simplicity of manners went still farther. Family worship and ceaseless conversation upon religious subjects drew masters and servants nearer together; they sat at the same table, and, generally, there was no other dining-room than the kitchen."

In conjunction with this austere simplicity, there was a mental life which was widely diffused. The traveler Davily said: "Among this singular people, Latin and Greek are taught to persons who elsewhere know not *a* and *b*." Calvin, too, had formed a Harvard out of the material left after the destruction of the ancient church; and his scheme contemplated the education of every child. Art did not flourish in his city. He proscribed musical instruments. There was one art which he and all his sombre host held in the deepest abhorrence, and that was the one in which the new-comer chiefly delighted, and of which he was the most gifted representative then alive, — the dramatic. No theatre had ever existed in Geneva and, since Calvin had preached there a play had scarcely ever been performed.

Two centuries had now passed since the death of the reformer, during which Calvinism had been softening under the influence of knowledge and prosperity. That large intellectual ingredient which he left in his system cannot but destroy it, when peace and plenty have set free men's minds from the paralysis of terror. The new ideas, the new literature, the new science, Pope, Newton, Voltaire, had found entrance into Geneva, as into the American colonies, and divided the educated class into two portions: those who adhered to the old austerities, and those who attempted the freer and more elegant life of "the world." Calvinists, moreover, are invariably a thriving people; so much is there in their system which is adapted to the inexorable limitations of man's lot and means. Not to waste must ever be a fundamental condition of welfare; and of all wastes there are none so extravagantly wasteful as the vices. The French refugees brought with them skillful hands. Many of the finer industries had long been rooted in the republic. The watches, clocks, and jewelry of Geneva

were already celebrated on both continents. The prosperous manufacturers visited Paris once or twice in their lives, and travelers of rank and fortune were coming in ever-increasing numbers to the land of lakes and mountains, which has since become, and must forever remain, the favorite playground of Christendom. Under these influences Geneva was in 1755 what Boston would have been if the mother country's protective system had not confined her people to the coarser products, and compelled them to seek fortune on, in, and beyond the sea.

Boston was English, and Geneva was French. Underneath the Calvinistic crust, hard and tough though it be, there is still the human being. You may see a gleam of distant recognition in the eye of an old French Calvinist when a line of Molière or a jest of Voltaire is repeated. Three centuries of Calvinism cannot quite extinguish his better self, and when Voltaire powdered the little republic with the shaking of his wig, Geneva had had only two centuries of Calvin.

The party of travelers were expected at Geneva. For several weeks Voltaire had been contemplating a settlement near Lake Leman, and had corresponded with citizens of Geneva with a view to the acquisition of "an agreeable tomb" in the neighborhood. He happened to arrive after the gates were closed for the night, but at the mention of his name they were opened, and the party found shelter at an inn. It was the evening of a national holiday; all was gayety and movement in the city. After four days' stay they took up their abode at the great château of Prangin, ten miles away, situated on high ground near the lake, and commanding the view of lake and mountain which so many poets and travelers have described. The owner lent this house of "thirteen front windows" to Voltaire, while he was looking about him for an abode more suited to his needs. The winter of the Alps lay white and magnificent before them as they looked out; the summit of Mont Blanc being about fifty miles distant. Within the château — of which they could only inhabit a corner — they all shivered with the cold, even the robust Collini, the youngest member of the family. He had been reared under Italian skies, and he had been, during all these late troublous months, looking forward to a residence in Paris, which should compensate him for his afflictions. He

found it dismal enough to shiver through the Christmas holidays and the January snows in a vast, cold, empty house ten miles from a town.

"This Lake Leman [he wrote to a Colmar comrade] is terrible. The winds reign there, and beat upon the château of Prangin in such a fashion that the philosopher, who is shut up and screened in every way, is all aghast. The Parisian lady, little accustomed to the lake and the winds, is continually in mortal terror at the noise of the blasts from the north. As to myself, I have nothing to fear except the noise and fury of *Apollo*. All this amuses me a little. I hear some one crying out on one side, 'Make a good fire!' on the other, 'Shut close all my windows!' One asks for a furred cloak; the other muffles up his head with five or six caps; and, as for me, I come, I go, I write, I die of cold and rage. But I am going to give you a piece of news: we are soon to leave this château. Notwithstanding the rigor of the season, our philosopher has made a journey to Geneva, where he was shown a very pretty country house in the outskirts of the city. He found it to his taste; he drove a bargain for it; they gave in to him; and the contract is to be immediately signed. Behold us, then, Genevans! I am very much put out about it. This is not the Paris which they have been promising me, and which I have always hoped for."

They remained two months at the château, notwithstanding its inconveniences. The master had the solace of occupation, more or less congenial, and he therefore could endure the sublime solitude, "far from the human race;" but the impatience of his companions gave him much distress. "*They*," said he, "have need of courage." There were days when he, too, was depressed, particularly while he was waiting for his papers and books, and when the Alpine winds chilled the very soul within him. There was no merry Christmas in the château, if we may judge from a letter which he wrote that day to D'Argental, in which he spoke again of "that abortion of a Universal History," which had done him so much harm. "I have only to bear patiently the wrongs I experience. I have no pardon to ask of any one, having nothing to reproach myself with. During forty years I have labored to render service to literature; in return, I have received nothing but persecutions. I ought to have expected them, and I ought to know how to suffer them. I am sufficiently consoled by the constancy of your courageous friendship. At this season I

can do nothing but keep quiet." But he added that when milder weather came, if one spark of genius remained to him, he would employ it in finishing his play, and, above all, in rendering his Universal History worthy of the public which had received the mutilated edition with so much favor.

The longest winter passes. He was cheered, too, by hearing from D'Argental that this new exile of an author and poet who made France illustrious in the eyes of Europe was resented by the public, who received his old plays with renewed enthusiasm. His little comedy of "Nanine," not very popular when produced in 1749, was played this winter with striking success. He said it was because the public began to regard him as a dead man, and he advised the actors to go on reviving his other half-successes, and thus turned his exile to account. At the same time came news that a tragedy by "old Crébillon," whom the court had galvanized into the semblance of a rival to himself, had failed. "I have read the 'Triumvirate,'" he wrote to his Duchess of Saxe-Gotha, "and can make nothing of it. This warns me that old men ought to cease exhibiting themselves to the public."

If the public regarded Voltaire as a dead man, he was giving extraordinary signs of life. He was doing at last what he might well have done twenty years before: he was founding a country home of his own. He had been thinking of this all the last year, and had told one of his Swiss friends that, if there should happen to be a good place on Lake Leman that could be bought for a sum not exceeding two hundred and twenty-five thousand francs, he should like to be notified of the fact. But a question arose. "You know I have not the honor to be of the religion of Zwinglius and Calvin; we are papists, my niece and I."

Could he possess, could she inherit, in a country still governed by the spirit of those reformers? They could; the legislative body of Geneva granted formal permission; the laws of adjoining cantons were found favorable; it remained only to choose the spot.

CHAPTER XVII.

SETTLING AT LES DÉLICES.

Two hundred paces from the gate of Geneva on the Lyons road, near the junction of the two rivers, the Arne and the Rhone, there was a hill, the summit of which was a plateau large enough for a villa and liberal grounds, and high enough to overlook the city, the two rivers, the lake, and give entrancing views of the Jura and the Alps. A commodious house, with beautiful gardens, stood upon this site, the terraced grounds of which descended to the very waters of the Rhone. It had been occupied recently by the son of the Duchess of Saxe-Gotha; it was then empty, and a life lease of the property was for sale. After some weeks of bargaining, Voltaire bought the lease for eighty-seven thousand francs, and only waited for the opening of spring to begin his favorite work of planting, transplanting, and embellishing. The place had been called St. John's. The new purchaser, rejoicing in his acquisition, as well he might, gave it the name of Delights (Les Délices) which it retains to the present time (1881). Other houses now conceal the views which he enjoyed; the road near which it stood is a street, called "Rue des Délices;" and the mansion, which is now not unlike one of the larger villas of our Newport, has been occupied of late years as a young ladies' boarding-school; but, in 1755, the place was sufficiently secluded, open, and rural.

"The lake border," said Voltaire, "is one neighborhood," and it was curiously adapted to be the abode of a man whom governments regarded with an unfriendly eye, and who might be obliged suddenly to change his jurisdiction. On his plateau he was in the republic of Geneva. He had only to walk ten minutes and cross a short bridge to get to the kingdom of Sardinia. Thirty minutes' easy riding would put him in France; in an hour he could be in the Swiss canton of Vaud. Nor did

he cease acquiring property in the region, until, at one time, he possessed five houses under four governments. This very winter he bought the lease of a spacious château near Lausanne, called Montrion, in a more sheltered situation, intending it as a winter residence. Later, he acquired a handsome house in Lausanne itself; then one in France; another in Vaud: and all of them within a circuit of a day's ride.

"All these residences [said he] are necessary to me. I am charmed to pass easily from one frontier to another. If I were only a Genevan, I should depend too much upon Geneva; if I were nothing but a Frenchman, I should depend too much upon France. I have fashioned for myself a destiny belonging to me alone, possessing as I do this droll little kingdom in a Swiss valley. I am like the Old Man of the Mountain: with my four estates, I am upon my four paws. Montrion is my little cabin, my winter palace, sheltered from the cruel north wind; then I am arranging a house at Lausanne, which would be called a palace in Italy. Judge of it: fifteen windows command the lake, to the right, to the left, and in front; a hundred gardens are below my garden; the blue mirror of the lake bathes them. I see all Savoy beyond this little sea, and beyond Savoy the Alps, which rise into an amphitheatre, and upon which the rays of the sun form a thousand accidental effects of light. There is not a more beautiful view in the world; Seraglio Point at Constantinople has not a finer one."

He suddenly changed his part in the drama of the time: from guest to host; from a man of bonds and annuities to a landed proprietor; from vassal to lord. During the whole of his Prussian episode, including the year and a half of subsequent wandering, his fortune had gone on ever increasing. In Prussia he had spent only a small fraction of his allowance from the king; at Colmar he could not have expended a tenth of his income; and, if Madame Denis at Paris relieved him of a few thousand francs per annum, he was still a man of business, still a speculator, still an owner of shares in ships trading between Spain and America. One such vessel, of which he was part owner, was named the Pascal; and by a coincidence upon which he delighted to jest, this vessel was one of the fleet chartered by the King of Spain in 1756 in his war against the "Jesuit-Kings of Paraguay." "The King of Spain," wrote Voltaire to the Countess of Lutzelbourg, "is sending four vessels of war against the reverend fathers. This is so true that

I, who speak to you, myself contribute my part of one of these four vessels. I was, I know not how, interested in a ship of considerable size which was about to sail for Buenos Ayres; we furnished it to the government to transport troops; and, to complete the joke of this adventure, this ship is named the Pascal." A king who hired a vessel from Voltaire in such an emergency we may be sure paid a good price for it.

He could well afford to live like a feudal lord, if any man ever could or can, and he did so from 1755 to the end of his life. Collini mentions that he kept "six horses, four carriages, a coachman, a postilion, two lackeys, a valet, a French cook, a cook's boy, and a secretary." He had, also, like Maupertuis, a pet monkey, who threw stones at the passers-by, and once bit the hand of his master so severely that he could not write for several days. Later, he bought a bear; and when he was told that a priest had written a book to justify the massacres of St. Bartholomew he wrote in reply, "Send me that abominable book, and I will put it in my bear's cage." Human guests could not be wanting. In the pleasant seasons of the year he had sometimes to excuse delays by explaining that "half the day was given unavoidably to the *processions* of curious people who came from Lyons, Geneva, Savoy, Switzerland, and even from Paris. Almost every day, seven or eight persons dine with me, and sometimes twenty." He availed himself of his character of invalid to avoid returning visits, and this privilege of kings was willingly conceded to him. At length, too, he had a room, in his winter house at Lausanne, which was really as warm as he wished; "so warm that, in January, he was troubled with flies, while looking out upon forty leagues of snow."

To crown his felicity, there was at Geneva the printing and publishing house of the Brothers Cramer, to whom he assigned the publication of his Universal History, which appeared in seven volumes in 1756. Gabriel Cramer, it seems, was a man of fine presence. "You a printer!" said the author, at their first interview. "I should have taken you for a chief of staff!" He was happy in his printers, to whose importance and prosperity he appears to have contributed. Dr. Tronchin, one of the most famous and successful physicians in Europe, was a native of Geneva, where the name is to this day famil-

iar; and, though he was about to settle in Paris, Voltaire often had opportunity to consult him.

Situated thus in the most beautiful region of the earth, he shone before Europe as a victor over circumstances, cardinals, and kings. Collini, looking back forty-five years, remembered with a glow this sudden transformation of Freytag's prisoner, Dom Calmet's monk, the Colmar exile, and the snubbed visitor of Cardinal de Tencin's antechamber, into a grand seigneur, living in opulence at summer villas and winter châteaux, town houses and country houses, spreading joy and plenty about him; a patron of the arts, a centre of hospitality, a personage that drew the eyes of mankind to the region he inhabited. He was himself fully alive to the change in the aspect of his affairs, and celebrated it by a vigorous and striking Epistle in verse, even before he had taken possession of his villa. This fine poem, which belongs to the literature of the lake, is one of the best of the hundred and twenty-two poems which he called Epistles, — a term which well describes the blending of the familiar and the grand which marks this specimen. He speaks of the lofty mountains, which "press the hells and cleave the skies," as the throne and refuge of Liberty. He extols the comparative equality of conditions which he observed at Geneva, where "small account is made of the count's coronet and the double-pointed mitre; where insolent Rank, wearing the ribbon woven by Vanity's brilliant hand, does not repulse with pride the humble and trembling prayer of sad Poverty; where necessary labors are not despised; where conditions are equal and men are brothers."

"On n'y meprise point les travaux necessaires;
Les états sont égaux, et les hommes sont frères."

This has, alas, never been true of any community, but Geneva was one of the few communities that tried to make it true, with some approach to success. We can imagine that this poem of a hundred and twenty lines, thick-sown with allusions of thrilling power to the local reader, must have enhanced the warmth of his welcome, and quieted in some degree the natural apprehensions of the Calvinist pastors. We can easily believe Pastor Gaberel when he tells us that, whenever the carriage and four of Voltaire was seen approaching the bank in Geneva, where it oftenest stopped, a crowd would quickly

gather to see him alight. On one occasion he did not relish this tumultuous compliment. "What do you want, boobies that you are?" he cried, from the upper step of the bank. "Do you wish to see a skeleton? Very well; behold one!" Then, throwing aside his cloak, he exhibited his meagre form to the throng, who applauded him as he made his way with difficulty to the carriage door.

One note of warning he received as he was concluding his purchase of Les Délices. It was from Jacob Vernet, the most active and distinguished of the Genevan pastors, who is still remembered by the long list of his theological works. He wrote thus to the new-comer: —

"Monsieur, — The only thing which troubles the general satisfaction at seeing a man so celebrated as you are arrive among us is the idea which the works of your youth have given the public of your sentiments concerning religion. I will not conceal from you that the wise men who govern us, and the good commoners as well, have manifested in conversation serious apprehensions on this subject. I hope that you will dissipate them completely. If, among us, theologians, lawyers, and philosophers are in accord upon religion, it is because the pastors confine themselves to the preaching of the pure gospel, and governments know that the gospel is necessary. Therefore, monsieur, we hope you will enter into our views, and that, when occasion arises, you will join us in turning our youth from irreligion, which leads to libertinage. Be sure that in that case you will be honored, cherished among us, and feared by no one."

To this note he replied, as it appears, on the same day, February 5, 1755: —

"My dear Sir, — What you write concerning religion is very reasonable. I detest intolerance and fanaticism; I respect your religious laws; I love and I respect your republic. I am too old, too sick, and a little too severe toward young people. You will give me pleasure by communicating to your friends the sentiments which attach me tenderly to you."

This letter, not too coherent, was not his only answer to the reverend pastor and to the old school party whom Jacob Vernet ably represented. The first visitor of note whom he entertained at his villa was his *protégé*, Lekain, then in his first

celebrity as the actor of chief tragic parts at the national theatre. His salary being only two thousand francs a year (eight dollars a week), he was glad enough of the chance to play in provincial towns, when his services were not required in Paris. Voltaire, with vehement iteration, invited him to his new abode, and, in April, to the great joy of the family, he came. "Zaïre" was rehearsed. Invitations were issued to the whole circle of the magistracy, and the tragedy was performed before them in one of the large rooms of the house. "Lekain," he wrote to D'Argental, "was, I believe, much astonished. He expected to find in me, as of old, the father of Orosmane and Zamora; he found only a mason, a carpenter, and a gardener. That, however, did not hinder us from making almost all the council of Geneva shed tears. Most of those gentlemen were at my Délices; and, by way of breaking up the circle, we began to play 'Zaïre.' I have never seen people more moved; never before were Calvinists so tender."

Himself, Lekain, and Madame Denis played the principal parts, and he expresses frankly the opinion, in more than one letter, that those parts were never better played at the Théâtre-Français. "No dramatic company in Europe," he once wrote, "has a better old fool in it than myself." They gave the Genevans, too, a taste of the new tragedy of the "Orphan of China," which produced, he says, "a great effect." It was a fortunate visit for Lekain. Voltaire called the attention of Richelieu to his merit and his poverty, which secured him a happy success at Lyons, and induced the First Gentleman to annex five hundred francs to his income. How, indeed, could a First Gentleman refuse such importunity as that with which the poet urged the claims of this great actor?

"He draws but two thousand francs a year from the theatre at Paris. One cannot have more merit, nor be poorer. I promise you a new tragedy if you deign to give him your influence during his stay at Lyons. We implore you, Madame Denis and myself, to procure for him that trifling advance of which he is in need. Have the goodnes to do him this service. You cannot imagine how greatly we shall be obliged to you. Do not refuse me, I beg of you. Let me flatter myself with having obtained this favor, which I ask with the utmost urgency. You need but utter one word to your colleague.

Forgive my saying so much about a thing so simple and so easy; but I love to entreat you, to talk to you, to tell you how much I love you and to what a point you will always be my *hero*."

Lekain went away happy from Geneva, with a large portion of the new play in his portmanteau, which play was to be produced at Paris before many weeks had passed. The poet had a singular delight in the thought of having given "the children of Calvin" a taste of the forbidden pleasure of the drama. Those children enjoyed it; but the reverend fathers disapproved. On the five "points" men may differ in opinion, but no one can rationally doubt that, to the *children* of Calvin, plays are more attractive than sermons. For the moment, however, no voice was raised in reprobation, and the magistrates, among whom there was one dramatic author, felicitated themselves on the chance which had given them so exquisite a delight. A French play of the old type, whether comedy or tragedy, had so few characters and required such simple accessories, that it could be played very well at one end of a drawing-room. It was but a poem in dialogues. If the actors held the book in their hands and read their parts tolerably well, a keen pleasure was enjoyed by appreciative guests. We gather from Voltaire's letters that, on this occasion, a space was cleared, Madame Denis and Lekain took their places, and began to declaim, while the company sat or stood in a semicircle before them. Misguided is the community where religion frowns upon an exercise so simple, so innocent, so becoming!

One of the children of Calvin, Jean Jacques Rousseau by name, a native of Geneva, but then living at Paris, was much interested in Voltaire's having chosen his native place as an asylum. He had but recently sprung into celebrity, though he was at this time forty-three years of age. In 1749, the Academy of Dijon gave as the subject of their prize essay this question: "Has the Restoration of the Sciences contributed to purify or to corrupt Manners?" Rousseau, who was then gaining a slender and precarious livelihood in Paris by copying music, saw this announcement in a newspaper as he was walking out to Vincennes, near Paris, to visit Diderot, who was then a prisoner in the fortress there. He tells us, in his "Confessions," that he was seized with a frenzy of inspiration to re-

veal to man the curse of knowledge; he was so deeply stirred, he says, as to be deprived of consciousness. "A violent palpitation oppressed me. Unable to walk, for difficulty of breathing, I sank under one of the trees of the avenue, and passed half an hour there in such a condition of excitement that when I arose I saw that the front of my waistcoat was all wet with my tears, though I was wholly unconscious of shedding them."

The Abbé Morellet, in his Memoirs, gives us a different version of the story (which Marmontel also relates), as from Diderot's own lips: —

"Arrived at Vincennes, he confided to Diderot his project of competing for the prize, and even began to develop the advantages which the arts and sciences had conferred upon human society. 'I interrupted him,' said Diderot, 'and I said to him seriously, That is not the plan to take; there is nothing new in that, nothing sensational [*piquant*]; that is a bridge for asses. Take the other side, and see what a vast field opens before you: all the abuses of society to emphasize; all the evils which desolate it, a consequence of the errors of the mind; the sciences, the arts, employed in commerce, in navigation, in war, — all so many sources of destruction and misery to the greatest number of men. Printing, mariner's compass, gunpowder, the utilization of mines, each a step in the progress of human knowledge, and each a source of calamities! Do you not perceive all the advantage which you will have in taking that view of your subject?'"[1]

Thus Diderot is said to have spoken. Nature, miseducation, and disease had combined to give this unhappy Rousseau a wonderful power to express emotions he did not feel, and preach a morality he could not practice. Fourteeen essays competed, and the prize was awarded to the eloquent perversion of Jean Jacques. Its publication gave him sudden and great celebrity. Soon after, he published a second Discourse, in the same strain and equally false, on the "Origin of Inequality;" in which he represented savage life as Arcadian purity and peace, and civilized life in odious and abominable contrast. Rousseau, whose mental life, as he has told us, began with his early reading of Voltaire's Letters upon England, sent a copy of the new essay to his fellow-citizen near the gate of Geneva. Voltaire ac-

[1] Mémoires de l'Abbé Morellet, 115.

knowledged the gift in a long letter, to which Rousseau replied at length.

These two letters are part of the literary history of that generation.

VOLTAIRE TO ROUSSEAU.

"I have received, monsieur, your new book against the human race; I thank you for it. You will please men, to whom you tell truths which concern them, but you will not correct them. One could not paint in stronger colors the horrors of human society, from which our ignorance and our weakness expect so many consolations. No one has ever employed so much intellect in the attempt to prove us beasts. A desire seizes us to walk on four paws when we read your work. Nevertheless, as it is more than sixty years since I lost the habit, I feel, unfortunately, that it is impossible for me to resume it, and I leave that natural mode of walking to those who are more worthy of it than you and I. Nor can I embark to go among the savages of Canada: first, because the maladies with which I am afflicted retain me near the greatest physician in Europe, and I should not find the same succors among the Missouris; secondly, because war has broken out in that country, and the example of our nations has rendered the savages almost as wicked as we are. I limit myself to be a peaceful savage in the solitude which I have chosen in your country, where you ought to be.

"I agree with you that literature and the sciences have sometimes been the cause of much evil. The enemies of Tasso rendered his life a tissue of misfortunes; those of Galileo made him groan in prison at the age of seventy years for having known the motion of the earth, and, what was more shameful, they compelled him to retract. No sooner had your friends begun the 'Dictionnaire Encyclopédique' than those who presumed to be their rivals called them deists, atheists, and even Jansenists.

"If I dared to reckon myself among those whose labors have been recompensed by persecution alone, I should show you men in a rage to destroy me, from the day that I gave the tragedy of 'Œdipe;' I should show you a library of ridiculous calumnies printed against me; an ex-Jesuit priest, whom I saved from capital punishment, paying me by defamatory libels for the service which I had rendered him; I should show you a man, still more culpable, printing my own work upon the 'Age of Louis XIV.,' with notes, in which the most brutal ignorance poured forth the most infamous impostures; . . . . I should show you society infected with this kind of men, unknown to all antiquity, who, not being able to embrace an honest calling, whether

that of workman or of lackey, and knowing, unfortunately, how to read and write, become courtiers of literature, live upon our works, steal manuscripts, disfigure them, and sell them; .... I should paint you ingratitude, imposture, and rapine pursuing me for forty years, even to the foot of the Alps, even to the brink of my tomb. But what shall I conclude from all those tribulations? That I ought not to complain; that Pope, Descartes, Bayle, Camoens, and a hundred others have experienced the same injustice, and greater; that this destiny is that of almost all those whom the love of letters has too powerfully influenced.

"Confess, monsieur, that these are trifling private misfortunes, which the community scarcely perceives. What does it matter to the human race that some hornets pillage the honey of some bees? Men of letters make a great noise about all these little quarrels; the rest of the world does not know them, or laughs at them.

"Of all the bitternesses spread over human life these are the least fatal. The thorns attached to literature and to the reputation which it gives are nothing but flowers compared with other evils which, in all times, have overwhelmed the earth. Admit that neither Cicero, nor Varro, nor Lucretius, nor Virgil, nor Horace, had the least share in the proscriptions. Marius was an ignorant man; the barbarous Sylla, the debauched Antony, the imbecile Lepidus, read little of Plato and Socrates; and as to that tyrant without courage, Octavius Cepias, surnamed so unworthily Augustus, he was a detestable assassin only while he was deprived of the society of men of letters.

"Confess that Petrarch and Boccaccio did not cause the intestine troubles of Italy; confess that the badinage of Marot did not cause the massacres of St. Bartholomew, nor the tragedy of the Cid the troubles of the Fronde. Great crimes have seldom been committed except by celebrated ignoramuses. That which makes, and will always make, of this world a vale of tears is the insatiable cupidity and the indomitable pride of men, from Thomas Kouli-kan, who did not know how to read, to a clerk of the tax office, who knows only how to cipher. Literature nourishes the soul, rectifies it, consoles it; it was of service to you, monsieur, at the time when you wrote against it. You are like Achilles, who inveighed against glory, and like Father Malebranche, whose brilliant imagination wrote against imagination.

"If any one ought to complain of literature, it is myself, since at all times and in all places it has served to persecute me; but we must love it, despite the abuse which is made of it, as we must love society, the agreeableness of which is corrupted by so many wicked men; as we must love our country, whatever injustice we suffer in it; as we must love and serve the Supreme Being, notwithstanding the superstitions and the fanaticism which so often dishonor his worship.

"M. Chappuis informs me that your health is very bad; you should come to reëstablish it in your native air, to enjoy liberty, to drink with me the milk of our cows, and browse our herbs. I am very philosophically, and with the most tender esteem," etc.

To this letter Rousseau replied, September 10, 1755, and in doing so gave a very good specimen of what we call his "early manner."

J. J. ROUSSEAU TO VOLTAIRE.

"It is for me to thank you, monsieur, in all regards. In offering you the draught of my sad reveries, I did not think to make you a present worthy of you, but to acquit myself of a duty, and to render you an act of homage which we all owe you as our chief. Sensible, also, of the honor which you do my country, I share the gratitude of my fellow-citizens; and I hope that it will be only augmented when they shall have profited by the instructions you can give them. Adorn the asylum which you have chosen; enlighten a people worthy of your lessons; and you, who know so well how to paint virtue and liberty, teach us to cherish them within our walls, as we do in your writings. All that approaches you ought to learn from you the path to glory.

"You see that I do not aspire to make men return to the condition of beasts, although I regret much, for my part, the little I have lost of that condition. With regard to you, monsieur, such a return would be a miracle, at once so great and so injurious that it would belong to God alone to perform it and to the devil alone to desire it. Do not try, then, to fall upon four paws; no one in the world would less succeed in the attempt than you. You set us up too well upon our two feet for you to cease to stand upon yours.

"I admit all the infamies which pursue men celebrated in literature; I even admit all the evils attached to humanity, which seem independent of our vain knowledge. Men have opened upon themselves so many sources of misery that when chance diverts some one of them they are scarcely less inundated. There are, besides, in the progress of things, some concealed chains of cause and effect which people in general do not perceive, but which will not escape the eye of the sage who is willing to reflect upon them. It was neither Terence, nor Cicero, nor Seneca, nor Virgil, nor Tacitus, it was neither the men of learning nor the poets, who produced the misfortunes of Rome and the crimes of the Romans; but without the poison, slow and secret, which corrupted, little by little, the most vigorous government of which history makes mention, neither Cicero, nor Lucretius, nor Sallust would have existed; or, if they had existed, they would not have written. The amiable age of Lelius and Terence was the remote

origin of the brilliant ages of Augustus and Horace, and, at last, of the horrible ages of Seneca and Nero, of Domitian and Martial. The taste for literature and the arts springs in a people from an inward vice which that taste augments. And if it is true that all kinds of human progress are pernicious in their own way, those of the mind and knowledge, which increase our pride and multiply our errors, directly promote our unhappiness. But there comes a time when the unhappiness of man is such that the very causes which have created it are necessary to prevent its increase: the sword must be left in the wound, lest the wounded man expire in drawing it out.

"As to myself, if I had followed my first vocation, and if I had neither read nor written, I should doubtless have been happier. Nevertheless, if letters were now annihilated, I should be deprived of the only pleasure which remains to me. It is in the bosom of literature that I find consolation for all my ills; it is among those who cultivate it that I taste the sweets of friendship, and learn to enjoy life without fearing death. I owe to it the little that I am; I owe to it even the honor of being known to you. But let us consult our interests in our business, and truth in our writings. Although philosophers, historians, scholars, are necessary to enlighten the world and lead its blind inhabitants, if the sage 'Memnon'[1] has told me the truth, I know nothing so silly as a people of sages.

. . . . "If we explore the original source of the disorders of society, we shall find that all the evils from which men suffer come to them through error much more than through ignorance, and that what we do not know at all injures us much less than what we think we know. Now, what surer means of running from error to error than the rage to know everything? If men had not supposed they knew that the earth did not revolve, they would not have punished Galileo for having said it revolved. If philosophers alone had claimed the title of philosopher, the Encyclopedia would have had no persecutor. If a hundred myrmidons did not aspire to glory, you would enjoy yours in peace; or, at least, you would have only rivals worthy of you.

"Do not then be surprised to feel some thorns inseparable from the flowers which crown great talents. The assaults of your enemies are the satirical acclamations which follow triumphal processions. It is the eagerness of the public for all your writings which produces the thefts of which you complain; but it is not easy to interpolate them, for neither iron nor lead will blend with gold. Permit me to say to you, from the interest which I take in your repose and in our instruction, Despise the vain clamors by which it is less sought to do you

[1] See Memnon, or Human Wisdom, a tale by Voltaire. 59 Œuvres, 29.

harm than to prevent your doing good. The more you are criticised the more reason you should give us to admire you. A good book is a terrible response to printed attacks; and who will dare to attribute to you works you did not write, as long as you write only inimitable ones?

"I am grateful for your invitation, and if this winter leaves me in a condition to go in the spring to dwell in my native land, I shall avail myself of your goodness; but I should like better to drink the water of your fountain than the milk of your cows; and, as to the herbs of your garden, I believe I should find in it only the lotus, which is not the food of beasts, and the moly,[1] which prevents men from becoming beasts."

Other correspondence between them followed, in an equally friendly spirit, neither of them foreseeing the antagonisms of the future. It is an evidence of Rousseau's power that when he had written only these two perverse, melodious essays he should so naturally take the tone of an equal in addressing the chief of literature, to whom, indeed, he offered homage, but only as a prince to a king. While these letters were passing, Rousseau witnessed the new triumph of Voltaire at the Théâtre-Français with pleasure and approval; for he spoke indignantly of the café critics who presumed to pronounce upon the faults of the "Orphelin de la Chine," though they were incapable even of feeling its excellences.

August 20, 1755, this drama, long deferred, written amid the distractions of the last two years, was produced at the national theatre, with Lekain and Mademoiselle Clairon in the principal parts. The theatre was crowded, and expectation was at the highest stretch. Both the friends and the foes of the author were present in force; but recent events had given the friendly faction an advantage. The author was absent and in exile. The opening of the play, too, was calculated to arrest and impress the mind. It presented an inclosure in the palace of Pekin, where the ladies of the court, some learned mandarins, the infant prince and his attendants, were gathered in horror and consternation, while the victorious Tartars, under the terrible Gengis-Kan, were sacking and killing without. A dynasty was falling; an empire was changing rulers; a storm of infernal war was roaring round this one spot, not yet en-

[1] A plant given by Mercury to Ulysses to prevent his yielding to the enchantment of Circe.

tered by the ruthless horde. China was seeing the triumph of force over civilization. "In vain," cries a noble mandarin, "were we the legislators and the example of nations; in vain was the world instructed by our laws. Wisdom is naught; force has destroyed all." The emperor's child, the "Orphan of China," sole relic of the dynasty, this mandarin has sworn to save; and, to this end, surrenders his own infant son to the Tartars, pretending it is the son of the slain emperor. But the mother revolts, and prevents the sacrifice. "You have thought like a hero; I have acted like a mother." She appeals to Gengis, who, at the end of five acts of agony, relents, forgives, restores. The play abounds in these telling situations and effective points, which practiced dramatists learn how to create. The scene in which Gengis first appears is full of dignity and power. "I sent terror; I bring peace." Carnage and destruction cease at his command. This kind of contrast, this exhibition of barbaric dignity and grandeur, has since been part of the common stock of stage effects. The author gave the actors an extraordinary number of lines and couplets of the kind which, as we say, "bring down the house," because they express a nobleness we all love, and would so gladly *live*, if we could. "We owe the king our time, our services, our being, — all, even the blood of a son born for his service; but our honor is a possession we do not owe him."

The success of this powerful drama could not have long been doubtful. Collini, who was present on the opening night, mentions the struggle of the factions, "one wishing to make the play succeed, the other wishing to make it fail." "The work," he adds, "was crowned with the most brilliant success. Mademoiselle Clairon, as well as the piece, triumphed over the cabal. She played the part of Idamé with so much expression as to share with Voltaire the triumph of that day." He might have mentioned, too, as part of the history of the stage, that, on this occasion, for the first time, the great actress and her female companion paid to art the last homage of playing without their *paniers*. He hastened to communicate the good news to Voltaire and Madame Denis. "The bookseller Lambert," says Collini, "came and begged me to get for him permission to publish the new piece. I wrote to Les Délices, and the author not only consented, but abandoned to me the

compensation which he had the right to demand." The play ran until it was suspended by the removal of the court to Fontainebleau. The actors followed the court, and played it in the palace, with every circumstance of *éclat*.

The queen, we are told, was afraid of the play, and said to the king, the evening before the performance, that there were, as she had been assured, some questionable passages in it. An hour after a gentleman came to her and asked if she desired the piece to be suppressed. She replied that she had not read it, and all she wished was to have passages cut out which savored of irreligion or disloyalty. But the police had scrutinized the play too closely, and Voltaire knew his ground too well to leave a line in it for timid bigotry to carp at. Over one passage the censor had held his pen in doubt for a while: "Nature and marriage were the first laws; they came from the gods; the rest is of men." But the censor had finally allowed the lines to remain. Another passage was cut out at the representation, but restored in the printed version. Gengis, while ordering the pillage and destruction to cease in Pekin, mentions particularly the sacred edifices and books. "If," he concludes, "this mass of writings was dictated by error, that error is useful to me; it occupies these people, and renders them more docile." It was a wise censor who scented danger in this. The queen being informed that the play was free from objection, it was given at Fontainebleau, as announced.

It is an evil time when the guardianship of virtue devolves upon well-meaning dullness, which makes it ridiculous! This poor queen, on her return from mass one day, snatched from a book-stand near the palace a little volume containing Voltaire's poem on "La Religion Naturelle." She tore it in halves, and said to the woman in attendance that, if she sold such books, her license should be taken away. The woman was astounded. She had supposed from the title that it was a work of edification.[1]

[1] Voltaire aux Délices, par Desnoiresterres, page 117.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LISBON EARTHQUAKE.

The Lisbon earthquake of November 1, 1755, appears to have put both theologians and philosophers on the defensive; for it was not easy to "reconcile" such a catastrophe with any theory of the universe which had yet found general or respectable acceptance in Christendom. La Mettrie, if he had lived so long, would have found it in perfect harmony with his system; but materialists were then few in number and of little note. The earthquake occurred, as it chanced, on All Saints' Day, one of the great festivals of the Roman Catholic year, and at an hour (9.40 A. M.) when the numerous churches of the city were filled to overflowing with worshipers. Lisbon, though no longer the opulent city of Portugal's great period, may have then contained a population of a hundred and seventy thousand; one half of whom, probably, were on their knees, in church, seeking to propitiate a paternal deity, at the very moment when the subterranean thunder of the approaching convulsion made every heart stand still.

At twenty minutes to ten that morning, Lisbon was firm and magnificent on one of the most picturesque and commanding sites in the world, — a city of superb approach, placed precisely where every circumstance had concurred to say to the founders, *Build here!* In six minutes the city was in ruins. Thirty churches had fallen. Fifteen thousand people were dead; fifteen thousand more were dying in anguish. These were the fortunate. The miserable survivors were face to face with everything that mortals dread most, — bereavement, ruin, desolation, anarchy, fire, and rapine. All the region round about was shaken fearfully, and repeated shocks kept the universal terror alive. Half the world felt the convulsion. For several weeks shocks, more or less severe, were experienced in places distant from the peninsula, — in Africa, in America, in

remote islands, and even in the midst of the ocean. Eighteen days after, at about four in the morning, came the turn of New England, when, in Boston alone, fifteen hundred chimneys were injured, and almost every house had its memento of the perturbation, if only in the family clock, stopped at eleven minutes past four. What city next would be overthrown? For many weeks, as we see in the letters and memoirs of that time, people in distant parts of Europe went to bed in alarm; relieved in the morning to find that they had escaped the fate of Lisbon one night more.

News was then about a month in traveling from Lisbon to Geneva. Voltaire was profoundly moved by this dread intelligence, which came to him first as a rumor too terrible to be true, then greatly exaggerated. After the first shock of horror and compassion, he was struck with the utter futility of all previous attempts of man to interpret a system of things in which such sudden and irremediable woe could come upon a people no more guilty than others. He remembered that he, too, had essayed to philosophize upon the universe. In earlier years he had taken pleasure in assisting to translate into French Pope's "Essay on Man," the argument of which had not seemed so unreasonable to him: —

> "All nature is but art, unknown to thee;
> All chance, direction, which thou canst not see;
> All discord, harmony, not understood;
> All partial evil, universal good."

In the presence of such a catastrophe he felt the nothingness of this statement, and of every statement by which man has sought to explain the illimitable whole of which his globe is but a warmed and peopled atom. "If Pope had been at Lisbon," he wrote, "would he have dared to say, '*All is well*'? Matthew Garo did not say it even when only an acorn fell upon his nose."[1] In many of his letters of those weeks there is some similar reference to the catastrophe. "It is a terrible argument against optimism," he said again and again. "The *All is well* of Matthew Garo and Pope is a little deranged. I dare no longer complain of my colics since that occurrence. It is not permitted to an individual to think of

[1] Allusion to La Fontaine's Fable of the Acorn and the Gourd. (Fables, Book IX., Fable 4.)

himself amid a desolation so general. . . . . It was the Last Judgment for that region; nothing was wanting to it except the trumpet."

And again, "Would you believe that people imagined at Geneva that there was an earthquake in France, as in Portugal, because the post-rider failed to arrive to-day? God preserve us from it! The Alps are a good counterpoise to the shocks; in all senses, they are the asylum of repose. The Protestants saved at Lisbon, and the Inquisition swallowed up, were not the effects of St. Dominic's prayers."

The counterpoise of the Alps did not prove sufficient; for an Alpine village was engulfed by an earthquake on the 9th of December, and, a few weeks later, a shock was felt at Les Délices. "I have had the honor," wrote the master of the house, "to have an earthquake in my hermitage." It did no more harm, however, than to shake a bottle of Muscat from the table while the family were at dinner. In the midst of these alarms came false news to increase the general consternation. A report circulated in Europe, in February, 1756, that Philadelphia had been captured and sacked; for the Seven Years' War, imminent in Europe, was already raging in America, where, indeed, it was a ten years' war.

Voltaire's poem upon the Disaster at Lisbon, written while the perturbations continued, is the most powerful and pathetic human utterance of that generation. A competent critic of our own day well styles it "one of the most sincere, energetic, and passionate pieces to be found in the whole literature of the eighteenth century.[1] True, it does but state the problem, not solve it; but who has solved it? It was much to state it without compromise; it was more to own it insoluble.

What crime, the poet asked, had those infants committed who lie crushed and gory upon the maternal breast? Was Lisbon wickeder than Paris? Yet Lisbon is destroyed, while Paris dances. *All is well, all is necessary*, do you say? If an eruption like this was necessary, could it not, I humbly ask, have burst forth in the midst of an uninhabited desert? "I revere my God, but I love mankind. When man dares to groan at so terrible a scourge, he is not presuming; he is only compassionate. Oh, mockery, to say to the afflicted sons of

[1] Rousseau, by John Morley, volume i., page 315.

men that the mortal anguish of individuals brings delight to others, and works good to the whole! What solace is it to the dying man to know that from his decaying body a thousand worms will come into life? All seems well to the vulture feasting upon the bloody members of his prey, until an eagle with rending beak tears the vulture in turn; then a man strikes the proud eagle with murderous lead; and, afterward, the man himself, pierced with wounds, lies on the battlefield, bloody, upon a heap of the dying, and serves to nourish the devouring birds. And you cry, *All is well!* The universe gives you the lie. Your own heart refutes the error. What sad, what perplexing, truths! A God, you say, came to console our afflicted race; *he visited the earth, and changed it not!* A sophist says he could not; another tells us he did not choose to do so, but will at some future time; and even while they argue Lisbon is engulfed, and the ruins of thirty cities strew the blood-stained shore. Either man is guilty, and God punishes his race, or else this absolute Master, without anger, pitiless, serene, indifferent, follows the eternal torrent of his first decrees. Either unformed matter, rebellious to its Master, carries in itself faults as *necessary* as itself, or else this mortal life is but a narrow passage to an eternal world. *One day, all will be well,* — this is our hope. *All is well to-day,* — this is illusion. "A caliph once, at his last hour, addressed to the God he adored as his only prayer, 'I bring thee, O thou only king, thou only infinite, all that which in thine immensity thou hast not,— faults, regrets, evils, and ignorance.' But he might have added to these, HOPE."

These are but a few of the thoughts of the poem, which extends to two hundred and fifty lines. It serves as a record to mark precisely how far man in 1756 had advanced toward the discovery of his own ignorance. That discovery was not yet complete; nor does the poem contain any indication of the path by which some imperfect comprehension of the universe may, in the course of centuries, be reached. Here is the knot which baffled the poet: —

> "Dieu tient en main la chaîne, et n'est point enchaîné;
> Par son choix bienfaisant tout est determiné:
> Il est libre, il est juste, il n'est point implacable.
> Pourquoi donc souffrons-nous sous un Maître équitable?[1]

[1] God holds in his hand the chain, and is not himself enchained. By his be-

The child Goethe, six years of age, was distressed by the same dilemma. The stupendous event, he tells us in his Autobiography, arrested the attention of the world for a long time, and set all minds upon reflection. Never before had the demon of terror diffused over the earth so wide-spread an alarm. "The boy," he adds, "who was compelled to put up with frequent repetitions of the whole matter, was not a little staggered. God, the creator and sustainer of heaven and earth, whom the leading articles of the creed declared so wise and benignant, having given both the just and the unjust a prey to the same destruction, did not seem to manifest himself, by any means, in a fatherly character. In vain the young mind strove to resist these impressions, which became all the more impossible, since the wise and Scripture-learned could not themselves agree as to the light in which such phenomena should be regarded."

Rousseau was attracted and repelled by Voltaire's poem. He clung to his optimism, because, as he remarked, he found "comfort" in it. The unhappy man saw in the catastrophe of Lisbon new proof of the essential evil of civilization. Savages, he truly observed, would not have built houses seven stories high, nor huddled a population of nearly two hundred thousand upon those seven contiguous hills. In the long epistle written to parry the points of Voltaire's poem, Rousseau does not advance anything of more value than this: God is perfect; therefore, all that occurs is the best possible; this world, then, really is, *because it must be*, the best of possible worlds. Hence, Pope is right, Voltaire wrong. It was an eloquent, plausible letter, which did not admit of serious reply; but it had prodigious effect at the time, because it came to the rescue of an imperiled doctrine, which the polite world had generally accepted and had found "comfortable." It was comforting to a marquis or a bishop, wasting forty thousand francs per annum in a province where ten thousand peasants had insufficient nourishment, to be assured, in serious and weighty words, by a man of great renown, that this was the best arrangement possible. It enabled Monseigneur to bear with equanimity the otherwise uncomfortable spectacle of hag-

neficent choice all is determined. He is free, he is just, he is not implacable. Why then do we suffer under an equitable Master?

gard laborers and pining childhood. Rousseau invited our poet to reply to this letter, and draw up a moral code which mankind could rest upon and adhere to in all circumstances.

Voltaire's reply was the burlesque story of "Candide." It was not a case for argument; Rousseau's best of possible worlds did not require refutation, but exhibition. In his poem upon the Lisbon earthquake, the author could only hope to reach the few hundreds in each country who inhabit and possess the universe; but almost any reader could catch the point of this diverting tale, — fit antidote to Rousseau's serious and deadly fallacies. I can perhaps give the reader in a few words an imperfect idea of this most celebrated of Voltaire's prose burlesques.

There lived in the castle of Baron von Thunder-ten-tronckh a young man of such engaging manners and innocent mind that he was called Candide. The baron was one of the most powerful lords of Westphalia, for his castle had a door and windows; he was styled My Lord, and his dependents laughed when he told his stories. He had a son and a daughter, whose tutor, Pangloss, was the oracle of the house. Dr. Pangloss proved admirably that there is no effect without a cause, and that, in this best of possible worlds, the castle of the baron was the most beautiful of castles, and the baroness the best of possible baronesses. It is demonstrated, he would say, that things cannot be other than they are; for, as everything was made for one end, everything is necessarily for the best end. Remark well that the nose is formed to wear spectacles; so we *have* spectacles. The legs were obviously instituted to be breeched, and we have breeches. Pigs were made to be eaten; we eat pork all the year. Hence, those who have asserted that all is well uttered folly; we must maintain that all is best.

The guileless Candide, deep in love with the baron's daughter, the fair and fat Cunégonde, believed implicitly in the philosophy of Dr. Pangloss. The testy baron surprised the lovers, one day, exchanging an innocent caress behind a screen in the dining-room. He kicked Candide out of his house; the baroness boxed her daughter's ears; and all was consternation in the best of possible castles. Wandering, penniless, Candide is trapped into the Bulgarian army; he sees and shares the horrors of an infernal campaign, which the author

relates in the absurd phrases of Dr. Pangloss. He escaped to Holland, and sauntered, half starved, into an edifice where a man spoke eloquently for an hour upon charity. He asked this eloquent man for aid. "Are you for the good cause?" inquired the orator. "There is no effect without a cause," replied Candide; "all is enchained necessarily, and arranged for the best." "Do you believe the Pope to be antichrist?" asked the orator. "I don't understand you," answered the young man; "but, whether he is or not, I want something to eat." "Get out! Scoundrel! wretch! Don't come near me, if you value your life!" The orator's wife, too, putting her head out of the window, and seeing a man who did not feel sure the Pope was antichrist, poured upon his bare pate a pailful of dirty water.

Candide witnessed, in the course of his wanderings over the earth, the dreadful catastrophe at Lisbon, where his opinions upon the necessary chain of events in the best of possible worlds consigned him to the tender mercies of the Inquisition. The wise men of Portugal had discovered that the true way of preventing earthquakes was to burn a few heretics by a slow fire. This was done with imposing ceremonial; but Candide was so happy as only to be flogged nearly to death, to the cadence of sacred music. In a Mahometan army he saw every kind of cruelty and horror; but, amid rapine, massacre, and crime unspeakable, never did the perpetrators fail to pause five times a day, and say the prayers enjoined by Mahomet. Candide finds himself at Paris, and while there he visits the theatre, and observes the manner in which a new play is received by the friends and foes of the author. At length, after adventures and mishaps of every kind, in all parts of this best of possible worlds, Candide and his Cunégonde, with Pangloss and other friends, are reunited in Turkey, upon a modest farm, and discover the secret of living happily. That secret was for each individual to labor in his vocation with fidelity and skill, without perplexing himself with a theory of the universe.

"What I *know*," said Candide, "is that we must cultivate our garden."

"Let us work without reasoning," said one of his companions; "it is the only way of rendering life supportable."

All the company assenting, each of them set himself to exercise his talents. The little farm yielded abundantly. Cunégonde was no longer either young or fair, but she became an excellent pastry cook. Every one had his task, and all labored with zeal and success. Dr. Pangloss occasionally harped upon the old string. "Really," he would say to Candide, "all events *are* linked together in this best of possible worlds. If you had not been kicked out of a beautiful castle, if you had not been put into the Inquisition, etc., you would not be here eating citrons, sweetmeats, and pistache nuts." To which the wise Candide would reply, —

"That is well said; but it is *necessary* to cultivate our garden."

This story of two hundred pages was not immediately published, but appeared at the end of 1758, when it had universal currency. As usual, the author affected extreme astonishment that any one should attribute so light a production to *him*. "I have at length read 'Candide,'" he wrote to a friendly pastor of Geneva. "People must have lost their senses to attribute to me that pack of nonsense. I have, thank God, better occupation. If I could ever excuse the Inquisition, I would pardon the Portuguese inquisitors' hanging the argumentative Pangloss for having sustained optimism. In truth, this optimism obviously destroys the foundations of our holy religion. . . . . For my part, I will forgive optimism, provided those who support that system add to it a belief that God in another life will, in his mercy, give us the happiness of which he justly deprives us in this. It is the eternity to come which makes optimism, and not the present moment."

The Lisbon earthquake was the awful prelude to a long period of most bloody and desolating war in Europe and America, in which the important nations of Christendom were involved. Voltaire might well say that nothing in his "Candide" was so extravagant as the real events of the period. In America there was a cause of strife, for it was a thing of necessity to decide which should be dominant in North America, English, French, or Indian; as, in 1756, man was still such that a question of that nature could only be settled by fighting until it was ascertained which was the strongest.

But in Europe what cause of war was there? On that war-

cursed continent, the immediate cause was personal government. A rash young minor poet, Frederic II. of Prussia, enemy to womankind, had given mortal offense to the four most powerful women then alive: First, to Maria Theresa, Empress of Austria, by wresting from her what she felt to be *her* province of Silesia, — fertile, populous, one of the bright "jewels of her crown." Next, he offended Elizabeth, Empress of Russia, by writing (among other nonsense) canto v. of his burlesque poem, "Le Palladion." Also, he had deeply wounded Madame de Pompadour, the maker of French ministries, by calling her, in derision and contempt, Petticoat III., and by saying, in reply to her compliment conveyed by Voltaire, "*I don't know her!*" Finally, this young king had made an enemy of Madame Denis, by not openly disavowing Freytag, and making public amends for the horrors of Frankfort.

Madame Denis was not "in politics;" she was only in Les Délices, nursing her uncle's ever-cooling wrath, to keep it warm; she was where she could convey to Pompadour the "*I don't know her!*" and other anecdotes. Les Délices, as we shall see anon, was influential at the Russian court, where there was a Princess Catherine, one day to be Catherine II., who owed her intellectual life to Voltaire, and held him in extreme favor. "My dear Elizabeth," wrote Voltaire, just after the death of that empress in 1762, "detested Luke [nickname for Frederic II.]; and I had not a little contributed to that; and I laughed in my sleeve, for I am a droll fellow." We shall see him erelong in familiar correspondence with the Russian court, and writing the history of Peter the Great, at the empress' invitation. Frederic would have done well and justly to soothe Madame Denis by a few decent words.

The other three offended ladies, who *were* in politics, and had armies under them, were uniting to crush the impolite and impolitic young poet. In August, 1756, he, having discovered their secret purpose, fell upon Saxony with sixty thousand men; after which he declared war. Every family, as Goethe remembered, took sides in this tremendous conflict, or else divided into parties. The family of Les Délices were in perfect accord. Frederic had amused himself, while waiting the slow development of the crisis, by turning Voltaire's tragedy of

"Mérope" into an opera, of which he sent a copy to the poet. This attention might have softened him a little toward a once-loved pupil, if he had had no irate niece at his side to bristle up into new fury every time the name of Frederic was mentioned. That name was seldom pronounced in the house. When Voltaire's monkey, Luke, bit the hand accustomed to caress it, the creature was thought to have behaved like the King of Prussia; and, from that time, the king was called Luke in the familiar conversation and correspondence of the household.

Pompadour was nearer Geneva than either empress, and Voltaire, through Richelieu, could reach her at all times. "It does not belong to me," he wrote to the duke in October, 1756, "to thrust my nose into all these grand affairs; but I can certify to you that the Man complained of has never been attached to France, and you can assure Madame de Pompadour, in particular, that she has no reason to value herself upon his regard. I know, too, that the empress [of Austria] spoke of madame a month ago with much eulogium."

To the public, in his poem, "To the King of Prussia on his Invasion of Saxony:" —

> "Tu vécus trop d'un jour, monarque infortuné!
> Tu perds en un instant ta fortune et ta gloire."[1]

Again, to D'Argental, in November, after Frederic's first successes: "That devil of a Solomon wins and will win. If he is always fortunate and covered with glory, I shall be justified in my former taste for him; if he is beaten, I shall be avenged."

[1] Thou hast lived too long by one day, unfortunate monarch! Thou hast lost in an instant thy fortune and thy glory.

CHAPTER XIX.

AMONG THE CHILDREN OF CALVIN.

"It is only France that can suit your uncle," wrote Lord Keith to Madame Denis, in 1753, and so it proved. From the windows of Les Délices he could see France, the nearest French soil being scarcely a league distant; the Rhone flowed at his feet; and the language of his native land was spoken all about him. But he was not in France. He was a "papist" dwelling among the children of Calvin; he was a conscious unbeliever living among conscious believers; and he lived among them as an acid lives with an alkali, in a common fluid. For five or six years he was an inhabitant of Switzerland; he dwelt close to its borders during the remainder of his life; and there was effervescence as often as anything occurred to stir the neighborhood.

At Geneva, as in Boston during the same period, there was a certain number of educated men of the world, who were able to be virtuous without relinquishing their mental rights; and, at first, associating chiefly with these, he felt himself safe in his new abode. But such persons were few in both cities. After the Lisbon earthquake, the government in both appointed a day of fasting and prayer, and the churches were crowded "all day," as we read, with terrified people. There had been a hopeful project of building a theatre at Lausanne, which Madame Denis and himself had warmly encouraged. The earthquake suspended the scheme. If a few polite families in each canton read with approval his poem upon the catastrophe, thousands thronged to the churches to hear the sermons of the Calvinist pastors.

He soon gave those honest pastors some real cause of apprehension. By an absurd coincidence that "Pucelle" of his, which had been long oozing into publicity, was printed during the earthquake period. The first edition, besides being both

imperfect and incorrect, contained a great number of passages of the grossest description by other hands, in which friends of Voltaire (Richelieu, among others) were indecently assailed, — passages which it was impossible Voltaire could have written. He was justified in disavowing the work thus curtailed and disfigured, and, the reader may be sure, he did so with all the force and reiteration of genuine alarm. To parry the effect of the false edition, he caused a number of copies to be made of the poem as he wished posterity to have it, and these copies he sent to members of the government, to courtiers, to Richelieu, to Pompadour; saying to each of them, in substance, "See, how innocent is the true 'Pucelle'! It is but the harmless badinage of a young man; a modest attempt of a French poet to imitate the immortal work of the divine Ariosto."

"La Pucelle" was evidently a favorite work with him. In composing it he gratified keenly all his loves and all his hates; above all, his love of verse and his love of fun. "I have wrought this poem with care," he wrote to D'Argental, in July, 1755; "I have regarded it as a pendant to Ariosto; I have thought of posterity, and I am doing the impossible to escape the dangers of the present time." He continued long to labor upon it, even after the publication of the first authorized edition at Geneva in 1762. "Whenever my master was sad or sick," says Wagnière, his last secretary, "he would say to me, 'Go and get a volume of Ariosto, or else my Jeanne.'" It was so that he named his 'Pucelle,' and that was the name which the binder had put upon the back of the volume."

It is to be noted, also, that the very quality of this poem which makes it to us a forbidden book was the one for which he valued it most. He doted upon the simplicity, the *naïveté*, as he called it, of the ancient authors. Writing once to Madame du Deffand, and advising her to cheer the eternal dark to which her blindness condemned her with amusing books, he added this passage: "You cannot read Ariosto in his own language, and I pity you much for it; but, take my advice, have the historical portion of the Old Testament read to you from one end to the other, and you will discover that there is absolutely no book more amusing. I do not speak of the edification which can be derived from it; I speak of the singular-

ity of the ancient manners, of the crowd of events, the least of which savors of prodigy, of the *naïveté* of the style, etc. Do not forget the first chapter of Ezekiel, which no one reads; but, above all, have the sixteenth chapter translated, which our translators dared not give literally, and you will see that Jerusalem is a beautiful girl, whom the Lord loved as soon as she had hair and breasts. . . . . Indeed, this *naïveté*, which I love above all things, is incomparable. There is not a page which does not furnish thought for an entire day. Madame du Châtelet had well commented upon it from one end to the other. If you are so fortunate as to get a relish for this book, you will never know *ennui* more, and you will see that nothing could be sent you which approaches it."[1]

The sons of Calvin were familiar with Ezekiel, but they did find in the work of the prophet a justification of "La Pucelle." One Grasset came from Paris with an incorrect manuscript of the poem, which he offered to sell to the author for fifty louis. "I told him," reports Voltaire, "that neither I nor any one of my house would ever transcribe things so infamous, and that if one of my lackeys should copy a single line of it I would discharge him on the spot." He denounced the possessor of the manuscript, who was promptly arrested and imprisoned, and all the copies of the work that could be found in the city were burnt by the hangman in the usual place. No harm except fright seems ever to have come to the author from this poem. After dreading its publication for twenty years, it was now freely circulated; editions were multiplied; artists illustrated it; the reading world devoured it, laughed over it, read it again and again. The Pope, too, placed it under the ban; the parliament of Paris burnt it; the police of Geneva hunted it down; and, in short, it had all the successes. A printer in Paris, in 1757, was sentenced to the galleys for nine years for printing an edition; but the author, chiefly through his own adroit management, escaped molestation.

Four works of his, in 1756, occupied the reading world of Christendom, namely, the poem on Natural Religion, the poem on the Catastrophe at Lisbon, "La Pucelle," and the authorized edition, in seven volumes, of his Universal His-

[1] To Madame du Deffand, September 17, 1759.

tory. Add to these the tragedy of the "Orphan of China," still in the newest gloss of its celebrity, reproduced in London and Berlin, printed and widely circulated. It were difficult to overstate the splendor of his reputation at this time; and it is necessary to bear it always in mind, in order to understand his position and his immunity. It was creditable, at least, to the courage and consistency of the Genevan pastors to oppose his proceedings and pursue his works as they did, and thus incur the wrath of an opulent seigneur who was investing a million francs in their neighborhood, and of an author who had at the end of his pen an atom more poignant than the death which the poisoned arrow carries. Maupertuis had not yet recovered from the "Diatribe of Doctor Akakia;" and some cantos of "La Pucelle" were like the stitched and beaded thongs upon which a chief hangs the scalps of his enemies. They were all there, — Desfontaines, La Beaumelle, Fréron, Boyer, and the rest, arranged and displayed in the highest style of the scalper's art, for Europe to laugh at for centuries.

The sons of Calvin, not appalled by these dreadful examples, soon placed themselves in open opposition to his private theatricals, basing their procedure on the law of the republic, which forbade the performance of plays, both in public and in private. That first infringement in the spring of 1755, when Lekain, Voltaire, and Madame Denis had presumed to declaim scenes from "Zaïre" in the drawing-room of Les Délices, they passed over in silence. But when, in July of the same year, he began to beat up recruits for his dramatic company among the young people of Geneva, when he set about furbishing and completing his theatrical wardrobe, when he had scenery painted, when he inverted wine-barrels for the foundation of a stage, when he was taking off the rims of two cart-wheels to provide rolling thunder, and when he was getting ready a dust-pan upon which to flash lightning, then the pastors rose upon him. The Consistory met July 31st, and the following is a translation of its proceedings: —

"Monsieur the pastor of Roches reported that the Sieur de Voltaire was preparing to play tragedies at his house, St. John's, and that some of the actors who were to perform were inhabitants of this city. It was said, also, that he was having

a stage erected and decorations prepared. Upon which, it was decided to address monsieur the First Syndic, and to say to him that the Consistory rests in perfect confidence that the Magnificent Council will never countenance a disregard of its decrees of March 18, 1732, and December 5, 1739, which forbid all representations of plays, as well public as private. It was further agreed that, with regard to those of this city who were disposed to play parts in tragedies at the house of the Sieur de Voltaire, messieurs the pastors of their neighborhoods are to notify them, on the part of the Consistory, to abstain from so doing."[1]

This being clearly legal, Voltaire submitted with edifying docility. He requested his friend, Dr. Tronchin, professor of theology, to assure the venerable Consistory that he was its very humble servant (*valet*), and he hoped they would bear it in mind. "A man," he wrote to another member of the family, Magnificent Tronchin, of the Council, "who owes to your honorable body the privilege of breathing this air ought to displease no one who breathes it. I am perfectly willing that your ministers shall go to the comic opera; but I am not willing to represent in my house, before ten persons, a piece full of morality and virtue, if that displeases them." A few days after, Professor Tronchin having visited him at Les Délices, he testified again the most complete submission to the laws of the Council. He added that he was extremely annoyed to have given occasion of complaint by the performance of a play at his house; but it was really more the fault of his visitors than his own, for they ought to have told him it was against the law. Now, however, that he was well informed on the subject, he should take the greatest care to avoid offending, his intention having always been to observe with respect the sage laws of the government.

The convenience of having a winter house under another government was now manifest. As soon as he was established in his winter quarters near Lausanne, finding the laws of that canton offered no obstacle, he stirred up the liberalized people of the city to go the length of building a theatre! That project, like so many others, was postponed by the convulsion

[1] Recueil d'Extraits des Registres du Consistoire de Genève, par M. Cramer, page 421.

that laid Lisbon in ruins. Terror pervaded all minds. The theatre could no longer be thought of, and the project was suspended. At Lausanne, however, the pastors could not prevent the performance of plays in his own house, and this became one of the most frequent recreations of the severe Alpine winter. His letters contain numerous allusions to his home theatre: —

"We gave Fanime yesterday, and with a new success. I played Mohadar; we were all dressed like the masters of the universe. I notify you that I played the part of the good father better than Sarrazin. This is not vanity; it is truth. I had wrath and tears, and a voice, now strong, now trembling; attitudes, too, and a cap! No, never was there seen such a lovely cap!"

[And, again, a few weeks after.] "We have played a new piece upon our pretty little stage. Madame Denis was applauded like Mademoiselle Clairon, and she would have been as much applauded at Paris. I inform you without vanity that I am the best old fool in any troupe. Believe me, you would have been much surprised if you had seen upon the border of our lake a new tragedy, very well played, very well felt, very well judged, followed by dances executed to a marvel, and by an opera bouffe still better performed; the whole done by beautiful women, by young men well formed who have talent, and before an assembly of taste. The actors have been formed in a single year. They are fruits which the Alps and Mount Jura never before yielded. Cæsar did not foresee, when he came to ravage this little corner of the earth, that there would one day be in it more genius than at Rome. . . . . I go from the theatre to my plants, to my vines, to my tulips; and from them I return to the theatre; and from the theatre to history." [1]

One of the witnesses of the representations at Lausanne was Gibbon, not yet the historian of the Decline and Fall, but only a young English student, perplexed in the extreme with rival theologies. He has left a too brief account of the dramatic performances of the amateurs: —

"The highest gratification which I derived from Voltaire's residence at Lausanne was the uncommon circumstance of hearing a great poet declaim his own productions on the stage. He had formed a company of gentlemen and ladies, some of whom were not destitute of talents. A decent theatre was framed at Monrepos, a country house at the end of a suburb;

[1] To D'Argental, February and March, 1758.

dresses and scenes were provided at the expense of the actors; and the author directed the rehearsals with the zeal and attention of paternal love. His declamation was fashioned to the pomp and cadence of the old stage; and he expressed the enthusiasm of poetry, rather than the feelings of nature. My ardor, which soon became conspicuous, seldom failed of procuring me a ticket. The habits of pleasure fortified my taste for the French theatre, and that taste has perhaps abated my idolatry for the gigantic genius of Shakespeare, which is inculcated from our infancy as the first duty of an Englishman. The wit and philosophy of Voltaire, his table and theatre, refined, in a visible degree, the manners of Lausanne; and, however addicted to study, I enjoyed my share of the amusements of society. After the representations at Monrepos, I sometimes supped with the actors."[1]

The drama was indeed the ruling passion of the household; for Madame Denis, not discouraged by the rejection of her "Coquette," was still courting in secret both the tragic and the comic muse. Her love of the drama led, in the spring of 1756, to her uncle's losing his secretary, Collini, the companion of his disastrous retreat from Potsdam in 1753. He had become an important member of the family, and shared in all the duties incidental to the new position of his chief. He had even been dispatched to Paris, during the Pucelle panic of 1755, to prevent the publication of the poem; when he had enjoyed a six weeks' holiday at the capital. But, in the spring of 1756, he committed an indiscretion that cost him his place.

"Madame Denis [he explains] loved literature, and even produced literary works, and for some time I was the confidant and copyist of her dramatic writings. She was composing then her tragedy of 'Alceste.' The occupation she gave me obliged me to have private interviews with her; I employed zeal and devotion in those little labors, which she nobly recompensed by gifts still preserved by me among the proofs of her esteem. The tragedy of 'Alceste' was not the only cause which obliged us to have private conversations together. The needs of a great house newly established, the oversight of which was confided to Madame Denis and to me, the necessity of concealing from her uncle the literary events which could disquiet him, and other reasons acci-

[1] Milman's Life of Gibbon, page 108.

dental and not less innocent, required secret conferences. It was this which had rendered our relations more intimate, and established between us the tone and language of friendship. Perhaps our intimacy had given rise to some suspicions in Voltaire's mind. There were suppers at which we were alone, — himself, his niece, and I, — when, in a manner perhaps too marked, she addressed herself to me, and the conversation appeared to cause him some discontent. One evening, among others, I had reason to be sure of this, by those half words which have no meaning for strangers, but which are well understood by those to whom they are addressed. From that time Madame Denis used some precautions in our ordinary intercourse, of which she had never before thought.

. . . . "A new imprudence at length caused my disgrace, and severed me from the illustrious man to whom I had resolved to remain attached to the end of his life or mine. I was one day occupied in my room in writing a letter to a young lady of the little city of Rolle, when some one came to inform me from Voltaire that his niece, Madame de Fontaine, was about to arrive at Les Délices from Paris, and that I was desired to go and meet her with a carriage. I rose; I left my room without shutting the door, and I departed, leaving upon my table my unfinished letter. That letter contained nothing but badinage and pleasantry; Madame Denis was named in it. During my absence one of her women came into my room, cast her eyes upon my letter, read it, and carried it to her mistress.

"On my return I was received with a coldness all the more cruel from my knowing nothing of the cause. As much surprised as afflicted, I withdrew to my room. My letter was gone! I turned pale, and perceived what had come of my folly.

"The affair became serious, although I had some hope that time would appease the resentment of Madame Denis, and that the friendship of her uncle would prevail over a fault so light. The next day they pouted all day without speaking to me of the letter. The second day Voltaire summoned me to his room. 'You have been wanting in respect to Madame Denis,' said he, showing me the fatal letter. I replied that I knew it, but dared hope she would not take amiss the badinage to which I had given way in a moment of gayety, and which my heart disavowed. Voltaire replied that it would be impossible for him to retain me in his service, because his niece, who was very much offended, demanded the satisfaction of my departure.

"I watched for an opportunity to see Madame Denis and set myself right with her. I protested my respect, my esteem, and my attachment. She replied vaguely, and without giving me any hope. I saw plainly that I had to make up my mind to a change, and I took

my part accordingly. Voltaire advised me to establish myself at Paris, and promised to write to his friends to interest them in my favor; he assured me that I should not remain there long without obtaining employment. No proposition could have been more agreeable to me in the circumstances.

"The evil was beyond remedy, though I deplored it. I wrote to my family to inform them of my departure, and some days after I took leave of Voltaire. We had a conversation of more than an hour together. He asked me if I was sufficiently provided with money. I answered that I had enough for my journey and to go on with for some time. Without replying, he went to his desk, took from it a rouleau of louis, and said to me, 'Take that; you know not what may happen.' I thanked him; he embraced me; and, with tears in my eyes, I left the house of Les Délices."

Collini adds various comments on Voltaire's character, and testifies anew to the natural goodness of his disposition. Voltaire, he observes, acted upon Swift's maxim, that a man should have money in his head, never in his heart. He had the art both of increasing and of enjoying his fortune. "Stinginess," he adds, "never had a place in his house; I have never known a man whose servants could rob him with more ease. I repeat it: he was a miser only of his time."

Exit Collini. Voltaire continued his good offices toward this imprudent secretary to the end of his own days. He procured for him in 1759 a good place at the court of the Elector-Palatine, which Collini held, I believe, as long as he lived, and the duties of which, he informs us, were much to his taste. He married there, and reared children. His place at Les Délices was supplied by a lad under sixteen, named Wagnière, a native of Geneva, who remained copyist, secretary, and factotum for the rest of his life, marrying one of the servants of the house, and becoming the father of a family in it. His salary was two hundred francs per annum, his wife's one hundred, with board and lodging for themselves and their children. "I was only fourteen," says Wagnière, "when I entered his service, at the end of 1754. He deigned to notice the extreme desire I had to labor for his pleasure and my own instruction. He appeared gratified by it, promoted my education, himself giving me some lessons in Latin, which I had previously begun to study." Wagnière evidently felt that Collini, imprudent

though he was, had been harshly treated, and he says he took warning from his abrupt dismissal to avoid giving occasion for censure.

To complete the story of Voltaire's contest with the pastors of Geneva on the subject of his dramatic performances, I will anticipate the course of events. The pastors, as they hoped, had frustrated his project of giving innocent delight to the polite people of their city. But he was an extremely difficult man to frustrate. Before he had been three years in Geneva, a turn in public events opened the way for his safe residence upon the soil of France; and, soon after, he bought the estate of Ferney, which, though in France, was only three miles and a half from the city of Geneva. Then he built a theatre at Châtelaine, a few yards over the border, and again induced Lekain to visit him, and give the irresistible *éclat* of his fame and genius to the opening nights. Invitations were scattered wide. The worthy, misguided pastors could offer only a moral resistance, which proved signally ineffectual. An eye-witness has left on record a very amusing account of the poet's triumph over them.

"The society of pastors [he reports] ordered a general visitation in the parishes, in order to obtain pledges not to attend the theatre of M. de Voltaire. The promises to abstain were so numerous that it was believed the actors would play to an empty house. But what delusion! The theatre is finished; the day of opening is fixed. Assemblies had been held in the social circles; the 'true patriots,' friends of religion and country, voluntarily engage not to put foot within it. They doom the actors to isolation and want; they are rigid; they prepare to struggle against temptation. But, alas! the day arrives, and in the evening of that day every one goes. It was like a procession. All the interest which the drawing of the lottery could create was absorbed that week by the passion for the drama; it seemed as if the people were going to get the grand prize at Châtelaine, such was the fury with which they went thither. This great concourse was attracted by Lekain, the celebrated actor from Paris, who, having come to visit Voltaire, was urged to perform at the theatre, and did actually play there three times last week, in three of Voltaire's pieces, 'Adélaide du Guesclin,' 'Mahomet,' and 'Sémiramis.' I should not know how to describe to you all the follies which were committed from the desire to see that man play, and the crowds of people who hastened thither even in the morning, notwithstanding the bad weather. As

much as a louis was paid for the hire of one carriage, and no more carriages were to be had. The most wretched vehicles from neighboring villages were brought in.

"I who write to you, I also shared the general folly, and could not resist the curiosity to see the celebrated actor. I waited for Saturday, when they were to play 'Sémiramis,' for I knew that he shone the most in the part of Nimias. I made up by hard work the time which I was to lose the next day; for I was at the theatre at half past eleven in the morning, and yet I found the pit filled. But I saw everything quite as well from the second tier of boxes, and I had the advantage besides of having the company of M. Mussard, formerly syndic, who also had made an exception to his patriotic principles against the drama, in favor of the actor in question.

"I saw some sublime things, which even surpassed the idea which report had given me of that perfect actor. How all the passions were depicted in his countenance! What magnificent recitation! What harmonious gestures! What brilliant pantomime! But the mere art of the actor was that which we least admired in him. It was those flashes of genius, that impetuous transport, that involuntary oblivion of self, which deprived the spectator of the time to consider, and the critic of the opportunity to analyze coolly. Such was the moment when he issued from the tomb of Ninus, thinking he had struck Assur, while he had really killed Sémiramis. It was the triumph of nature, and it caused a universal shudder.

"But not the least part of the exhibition was Voltaire himself, seated against a first wing, in view of all the audience, applauding like one possessed, now with his cane, now by exclamations, — '*It could not be better! Ah! mon Dieu! how well that was done!*' — now in preaching emotion by example, and putting his handkerchief to his eyes. So little was he able to control his enthusiasm that, at the moment when Nimias was leaving the stage, after having defied Assur, regardless of destroying the illusion, he ran after Lekain, seized him by the hand, and embraced him near the back of the stage. A more comic incongruity could not be imagined; for Voltaire resembled one of those old men of comedy, — his stockings rolled upon his knees, and dressed in the costume of the good old times, unable to sustain himself upon his trembling limbs, except with the aid of his cane. All the marks of old age are imprinted upon his countenance: his cheeks are hollow and wrinkled, his nose prolonged, his eyes almost extinguished; but, as Fréron says, that frosted head incloses a volcano always in eruption, although along with flames it throws out smoke and ashes also." [1]

[1] Voltaire et les Genevois, par J. Gaberel, page 46.

The exultation of Voltaire at his triumph breaks forth in his letters. "The manners of the children of Calvin are much ameliorated," he wrote; "they burn Servetus no more. Apropos of Calvin, I am going to play them a turn which will not please them. I have procured an old arm-chair which served their reformer as seat or pulpit, and this I shall use in the interview between Cinna and Augustus [in the "Cinna" of Corneille]: —

'Prends un siège, Cinna, prends.'[1]
Act V., Scene 1.

What a fine noise there will be when the preachers find it out!" He prospered in this little scheme. A few days later he wrote, "Well, I have succeeded; I made the whole council cry; Lekain was sublime, and I am corrupting the youth of this pedant city." At length, but not until 1766, good sense prevailed over prejudice, and the council allowed a theatre to be opened in Geneva, the ill-success of which showed how needless was the opposition to it. The austerity of manners in Geneva softened to such a degree that when Albert Gallatin, a native of Geneva and a graduate of its University in 1779, first saw Boston, in 1783, he was amazed at the contrast between the two cities, and spoke of the Calvinistic provincialism that prevailed in Boston very much as Frenchmen had spoken of Geneva when his father first became a member of the Magnificent Council: "Life in Boston is very wearisome. There are no public amusements, and so much superstition prevails that singing, violin-playing, card-playing, and bowls are forbidden on Sunday."[2]

There was, however, another child of Calvin who appeared to be profoundly displeased at Voltaire's success in establishing the theatre in Switzerland. This was Jean-Jacques Rousseau, himself a dramatic author and a composer of music. Upon the question of the drama he placed himself in distinct opposition to the band of philosophers, and, as they thought, went over to the "enemy."

In 1757 Voltaire had the pleasure of a visit from D'Alembert, then in the midst of his work upon the Encyclopædia. His visit extended to five weeks, in the course of which he

[1] Take a seat, Cinna, take a seat.
[2] Life of Albert Gallatin, by Henry Adams, page 28.

met a large number of the more liberal members of the clergy and council, who paid great honor to an author so distinguished. On his return to Paris, D'Alembert, as if in recognition of the civilities he had received, wrote an article upon Geneva for the Encyclopædia, in which he gave the highest praise both to the people and the pastors; mentioning even their opposition to the theatre in the tone of most respectful dissent. The clergy, he said, were men of exemplary manners, who lived in great harmony with one another, as well as with magistrates and people. Several of them, he added, did not believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ, a doctrine of which Calvin, their chief, was so zealous a defender, and on account of which he caused Servetus to be burned. "Hell, also, one of the principal points of *our* creed, is not believed at all to-day by several ministers of Geneva; and, in one word, they have no other religion than perfect Socinianism, rejecting all that is called mystery, and imagining that the first principle of a true religion must be to propose nothing for belief which is offensive to reason." Then upon the theatre: —

"The drama is not permitted at Geneva: not that plays in themselves are disapproved, but they fear the taste for dress, dissipation, and libertinage, which troupes of actors bring with them. Nevertheless, would it not be possible to remedy this inconvenience by severe and well-executed laws regulating the conduct of the actors? By this means Geneva would have plays and preserve its manners. Theatrical representations would form the taste of the people, give them a fineness of tact, a delicacy of sentiment, which it is very difficult to acquire without that resource."

An article in an Encyclopædia has seldom brought about the ears of the author such a storm of protest and counterstatement as this one upon Geneva. Voltaire knew very well how it would be received, for the article had been more than suggested by himself. "I am *told*," he wrote to the author, "that there is an eulogium of Geneva in the new volume, in which it is said you praise the moderation of certain people. Alas! you know them not; the Genevese do not impart their secret to foreigners. The lambs whom you believe tolerant would be wolves if they were allowed to be." When the volume arrived, pastors and flocks appeared to be equally scan-

dalized, and solemn declarations were published of implicit belief in the doctrines which D'Alembert had congratulated the clergy upon having escaped. I need not dwell upon the details of this affair, because such things are all too familiar to ourselves, who live, as they lived, in an atmosphere of insincerity, omnipresent though varying in density in every neighborhood and every house, turning religion itself into a universal means of demoralization.

Rousseau, in a letter of two hundred pages, addressed to D'Alembert, defended the council and clergy of his country in their opposition to the theatre, and repeated, with his own impassioned, fallacious eloquence, the whole clerical argument against the drama. He drew a powerful contrast between his native Geneva, as he fancied he remembered it in his youth, an austere Arcadia, inhabited by a happy people of simplest manners, simplest tastes, and Paris, the abode of luxurious and wasteful frivolity. Paris was the chosen home of the drama; Geneva knew it not. How sad the change, if the honest people of Geneva should abandon their inexpensive social clubs and domestic circles, to waste at the theatre the money needed for their children's bread! It is impossible to conceive a piece of writing at once more eloquent and more misleading than this. He still treated Voltaire with personal respect, and mentioned certain plays of his and parts of plays, which, he said, were so excellent and so wise that, if plays in general were like them, it would be necessary for all the world to go to the theatre.

Voltaire, who had hoped that Rousseau would at last range himself on the liberal side, was almost as much puzzled by this outburst as he was disappointed. "What is this book of Jean-Jacques," he asked Thieriot, "against the drama? Has Jean-Jacques become a father of the church?" And later, "This lunatic, who might have been something under the guidance of his brethren of the Encyclopædia, takes it into his head to make a sect of his own. After writing a bad play, he writes against the stage. He finds four or five rotten staves of Diogenes' tub, and gets within them to bark at his friends."

But he still refrained from breaking with Rousseau, perceiving clearly that the reason of the man was not the avenue through which he reached his opinions. He made an oppor-

tunity, a year or two after, to publish a letter to an Italian nobleman, in which he gave an elaborate defense of the drama and met the points of Rousseau's epistle, without mentioning his name.

"The theatre, [said he] is the *chef-d'œuvre* of society. Men in general are compelled to labor at the mechanic arts, and their time is happily occupied; while men of rank and wealth have the misfortune to be abandoned to themselves, to the *ennui* inseparable from idleness, to gaming more fatal than *ennui*, to petty factions more dangerous than play and idleness.

"What is the true drama? It is the art of teaching virtue and good manners by action and dialogue. How cold in comparison is the eloquence of monologue! Have we retained a single phrase of thirty or forty thousand moral discourses? And do we not know by heart admirable sentences placed with art in interesting dialogues? Homo sum; humani nihil a me alienum puto.[1]

"It is this which makes one of the great merits of Terence; it is that of our own good tragedies, of our good comedies. They have not excited a profitless admiration; they have often corrected men. I have seen a prince pardon an injury after a representation of the clemency of Augustus. A princess, who had despised her mother, went away to throw herself at her feet after witnessing the scene in which Rhodope asks her mother's forgiveness. A man well known sought reconciliation with his wife after seeing *Prejudice à la mode*. I saw the proudest man in the world become modest after the comedy of the 'Glorieux.' And I could cite more than six sons of distinguished families whom the comedy of the 'Prodigal Son' reformed. If our bankers are no longer coarse, if the people of the court are vain dandies no longer, if doctors have abjured the robe, the cap, and consultations in Latin, if some pedants have become men, to what are we indebted for it? To the theatre, — to the theatre alone.

"What pity ought we not, then, to have for those who wage war upon this first of the literary arts, who imagine that we ought to judge the theatre of to-day by the tressles of our ages of ignorance, and who confound Sophocles, Menander, Varius, and Terence with Tabarin[2] and Punch! But how much more to be pitied are they *who admit Punch and Tabarin, while rejecting Polyeucte, Athalie, Zaïre, and Alzire!* Such are the inconsistencies into which the human mind falls every day!

[1] Terence, in the comedy of Heautontimorumenos, Act I., Scene 1. I am a man: I deem nothing human foreign to me.

[2] Farce writer and strolling player of the previous century.

"Let us pardon the deaf who speak against music, the blind who hate beauty; such persons are less enemies of society, less conspirators to destroy its consolation and its charm, than unfortunate beings to whom nature has denied some organs.

"I have had the pleasure of seeing at my country house 'Alzire' performed, — that tragedy wherein Christianity and the rights of man triumph equally. I have seen Mérope's maternal love bringing tears without the aid of the love of gallantry. Such subjects move the rudest soul, as they do the most refined; and if the common people were in the habit of witnessing such spectacles of human worth there would be fewer souls gross and obdurate. It was such exhibitions that made the Athenians a superior nation. Their workmen did not spend upon indecent farces the money which should have nourished their families; but the magistrates, during their celebrated festivals, summoned the whole nation to representations which taught virtue and the love of country. The plays which are given among us are but a feeble imitation of that magnificence, but, after all, they do preserve some idea of it. They are the most beautiful education which we can give to youth, the noblest recreation after labor, the best instruction for all orders of citizens; they furnish almost the only mode of getting people together for the purpose of rendering them social beings."

So passed the five or six years of his life on the soil governed by the children of Calvin. It was impossible that he and they should blend, except through their reversion to the Gallic type, and that could not be accomplished in the time left to him. He did much toward it; he prepared the way at Geneva, as elsewhere, for that happy time when religion shall be freed from the impertinences that repel the thoughtful without winning the thoughtless. Amusing incidents frequently occurred. He happened to say, in a familiar letter to Thieriot, of 1757, that "the Picard, Jean Chauvin, called Calvin, the veritable assassin of Servetus, had an atrocious soul;" and this letter found its way into a newspaper. Many sons of Calvin came to the defense of their spiritual progenitor. The affair called forth some sprightly verses, addressed to himself by Rival, a Genevan who was not a child of Calvin. Voltaire replied in a happy strain; both poems were speedily published, and Voltaire has preserved both in his "Commentaire Historique." The witty Rival found all parties wrong: Servetus, for taking the trouble to be an anti-trinitarian in an imbecile age; the bilious Calvin, for employing the fagot

to refute him; and Voltaire, for not fêting the saint of the country he inhabited. "You are rich, famous, free; Tronchin watches over your health; all who know anything admire you: you are wrong, famous Voltaire, to risk all that for the pleasure of pinching without laughter."

"No," he replied, "I am not wrong to dare to utter what worthy men think. For forty years I have braved the base empire of the despots of the mind. I am not wrong to detest those religious assassins; and if that horrible frenzy has passed, if fanaticism is overthrown, hypocrisy remains! Buffoons in shabby gowns, bad church-music, bad verses, stolen sermons, am I wrong if I despise you?" All this and more, in lightest, melodious stanzas, readable by young and old, learned and simple.

Meanwhile, the Seven Years' War was raging on two continents. The name of Colonel Washington had been printed in European gazettes. Frederic of Prussia was defending himself with splendid constancy and tact against the four ladies so lightly offended by him, — ladies who had on their side six hundred thousand soldiers and a poet. It was those ladies who contrived to make it safe for Voltaire to live on the soil of France, provided he had other houses to run to within easy reach. We shall now see him on familiar terms with the belligerents, exchanging frequent letters with Frederic, and in relations, more or less intimate, with all the courts hostile to that monarch.

CHAPTER XX.

HE IS OFFERED A RED HAT.

Madame de Pompadour, in the spring of 1756, had been mistress of the King of France for twelve years. She lamented, so her *femme de chambre* records, her total lack of taste for that vocation, and tried hard to acquire it. It was therefore a relief to her when the king wandered in quest of beauty younger and less cold; and, such was her hold of him, that the less she shared his bed the more she had of his throne. Her biographers, Messieurs de Goncourt, give us the secret of her enduring power over the king in one happy phrase: "She killed all his time for him." The dull man had a dreadful commodity of twenty-four hours to do something with every day; she took them all off his hands, and slew them. She could not only provide in exquisite perfection all the usual pleasures, such as music, drama, ballet, tableaux, but she had all the coquetries, all the *enfantillages*, all the graceful audacities, all the little talents, which could amuse a man doomed to satiety from his childhood.

It is an argument against royalty that a nation has no right to select one family from the mass of its people, and surround it with conditions which reduce its members to imbecility; and if a nation commits this enormity there is a kind of justice in the members of that blighted family alleviating the splendid tedium of their lot by any diverting toy they can buy. This bored king had his alleviating Pompadour, and France paid for her with the loss of Canada, India, several rich islands, vast treasures, and many brave soldiers.

The woman had a difficult part to play; for the court was full of her enemies, and the nation hated her. The injured queen, the dull Dauphin, the zealous Boyer, all the severer ecclesiastics, and several of the ministers were utterly hostile to her. She would say to the Duke of Maurepas, on seeing him

enter with a bag of papers to read to the king, "Go away, Monsieur de Maurepas; you are making the king yellow. Adieu, Monsieur de Maurepas." And the minister, observing that the king was not displeased at this, would go away, and the public business was deferred. One of her devices was to impart "a gayety to the king's religion," giving a subdued festive character to his penitence; for this king never succeeded in getting away from the early teachings of his preceptor, Abbé de Fleury. He was an absolute coward; upon every occasion of alarm, he was liable to a lapse, which would banish the mistress, and give the ancient Bishop of Mirepoix despotic power over the intellect of France. Hence, during Lent, she would arrange a series of "sacred concerts" in her own apartment, at which she sang herself, and assigned parts to nobles and princes who could sing; thus making an entertainment which amused the king, while permitting him to think that he was assisting at a religious exercise, and setting a good example to his court.

The Lent of 1756, which followed the long-continued consternation of the Lisbon earthquake, was observed all over Christendom with unusual devotion and austerity. Madame fell in with "the mode," and performed the part of penitent very prettily and with much success, making a merit of shutting up the unfrequented passage between her room and the king's. She had just succeeded in forcing her appointment as lady of honor to the queen, and served her first turn of duty in February, 1756. Being thus enrolled among the respectable ladies of the kingdom, she conceived the idea of signalizing her Lenten penitence by an achievement that would bring the entire pious faction to her feet in wondering gratitude. This was no less than inducing Voltaire, also, to join the hypocrites, or, as Condorcet states it, "to make Voltaire one of the actors in this comedy." The agent who proposed it to the poet was the Duke de La Vallière, grand-nephew of a mistress of Louis XIV.; he was one of Madame de Pompadour's familiar court, and an old acquaintance of Voltaire. The duke wrote to him thus, March 1, 1756: —

"I have received, my dear Voltaire, the *sermon* [poem on the Lisbon earthquake] which you sent me, and, despite the sound philosophy which reigns in it, it has inspired me with more respect for its author

than for its moral. Another effect which it has had upon me is to determine me to ask of you the greatest mark of friendship which you could possibly give me. You are nearly sixty years of age; I avow it. You have not the most robust health; I believe it. But you have the most beautiful genius and the best-balanced head; of that I am sure. And if you were to commence a new career under the guise of a young man of fifteen, though he should live longer than Fontenelle, you would furnish him with matter enough to render him the most illustrious man of his age. I do not fear, then, to ask you to send me some psalms embellished by your versification You alone have been, and are, worthy to translate them. You will obliterate J. B. Rousseau; you will inspire edification; and you will put it in my power to give the greatest pleasure to madame. . . . . It is no longer Mérope, nor Sully, nor Metastasio, that we want, but a little David. Imitate him; enrich him. I shall admire your work, and shall not be jealous of it, provided it be reserved to me, poor sinner that I am, to surpass it with my 'Betzabée.' I shall be content; and you will add to my satisfaction in granting me what I ask with the greatest importunity. Give me one hour a day; show the psalms to no one; and I will instantly have an edition of them published at the Louvre, which will yield as much honor to the author as pleasure to the public. I say to you again, I am sure she will be enchanted with it; and I shall be enchanted also that through you I give her a pleasure so great. I have long relied upon your friendship, as you know; and therefore I expect to receive immediately the first-fruits of a certain success which I am preparing for you. But I do not for this release you from your promise to send me the royal 'Mérope' [Frederic's opera], and the defense of my dear friend, 'Jeanne' [La Pucelle]. Adieu, my dear Voltaire; I expect news from you with the greatest impatience. You are sure of my sincere friendship; you can rely not less upon my genuine gratitude."

Voltaire's answer to this edifying epistle, which politely asked him to give the lie publicly to his whole career, has not been discovered. We gather from the duke's next letter on the same subject that Voltaire replied by asking questions; such as, What can have befallen madame? What is her object? Is she giving in to Boyer and the Dauphin? What *is* the matter? The duke replied, April 22, 1756: —

"I am going to answer, with the greatest pleasure in the world, my dear Voltaire, all the questions which you ask me. . . . . Let us pass to the more interesting. A ray of grace has enlightened, but without intoxicating. Some moderate changes are the only evidence of it.

During the whole of Lent she does not go to the theatre, and fasts three times a week, but with the condition that she shall not be disordered by it. The moments she can spare for reading are probably employed in good books; for the rest, the same life, the same friends, and I flatter myself that I am one of the number. She is as amiable as she has always been, and has more credit than ever. This is precisely the position in which she is, and which makes her desire some psalms of your composing. She knows you, she admires you, and she wishes to read you again; but she takes pleasure in prescribing to you the subject of her readings. So, I repeat, it is necessary that you give us an hour a day, and you will immediately find that you have satisfied our desires and sustained your own reputation. I tell you once more, as simple truth, without stale flattery, that from all time you have been destined to do this work. You owe it to yourself, and to us also; and it will be a mark of attention to which the good prophet (David) will be very sensible. I also shall be very sincerely grateful for this proof of friendship on your part, and I expect at once the happy first essays.

"With regard to the Prussian opera [Mérope], the completion of 'La Pucelle,' which you promised me, and the other things you have made me hope for, direct them to Geneva to M. Vasserot de Châteauvieux, who will forward them by the first parcel he sends me. I ask for two copies of your poems (on the 'Religion of Nature' and the 'Disaster of Lisbon') with the notes: one for Madame de Pompadour, the other for myself. You will do well to inclose with them one or two psalms, and I thank you for them in advance."[1]

The answer to this letter is unknown also. We know, however, that the psalms were not sent with the "Pucelle," and were never written. M. Condorcet, in his memoir of Voltaire, written as if by the authority of the poet, adds some statements still more extraordinary. The Duke de la Vallière, he says, proposed the translation of the Proverbs of Solomon, as well as of the Psalms; as a reward, the author was to return to Paris, "under the protection of the devout favorite" of the king. "Voltaire," adds M. Condorcet, "could not become a hypocrite, *not even to be a cardinal*, — a lure held out to him almost exactly at the same time." This offer of the hat was not credited by the intimate friends of Voltaire, when the story was first published; but, in 1826, the letters of La Vallière appeared in print, and it became less incredible.

[1] 2 Mémoires sur Voltaire, par Wagnière et Longchamp, page 535.

The reader may ask, Could Pompadour have fulfilled an engagement to make Voltaire a cardinal? It is difficult to set limits to the possibilities of a woman who could be, at one and the same time, mistress to Louis XV. and lady of honor to his queen, with the prestige and power of both positions. She was about to make the Abbé de Bernis cardinal and minister; and he was scarcely a more incongruous cardinal than Voltaire himself would have been. According to Marmontel, who lived much with him for years, this abbé, on issuing from his theological studies at Saint Sulpice, was a gallant, chubby-faced, rosy-checked young beau, who composed pretty verses for gay suppers, and lived the life of pleasure at Paris, without visible means of paying his share of the expense. As soon as he heard of the king's inclination for Madame d'Estioles, off he posted to her country house, with his portfolio of verses under his arm. He amused her; she installed him in the Tuileries with a royal pension; he became the acknowledged lover of Princess de Rohan; and soon he was ambassador, cardinal, minister, ambassador again; and his wondrous luck outlasted the monarchy. If she could do this for a *Babet* [so Voltaire named Bernis, from his resemblance to a plump and rosy flower-girl of the theatre], she could have done as much for Voltaire — with his help.

This proposal of the Duke de La Vallière may have suggested to Voltaire two poems, which were composed soon after: one a paraphrase of the book of Ecclesiastes, the other a translation of the Song of Solomon; neither of which would have answered the purpose of Madame de Pompadour. It was said at the time that this translation of the Song of Solomon was "less indecent than the original." Neither is indecent. He took occasion in his preface to expatiate on that *naïveté* of the ancient poets, which he so much admired, and gave some "strong" passages from the Old Testament, which appear to have been indeed a "revelation" to many readers.

Fair and frugal France, despoiled by such people as these Pompadours, Louis, Bernis, and Boyers, was drifting to perdition; and now, in the early days of 1757, at the beginning of a long and desperate war with England and Prussia, a trifling event gave the kingdom entirely over to the direction of the mistress and her chubby-cheeked rhymer.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR.

JANUARY 5, 1757, at a quarter past six P. M., the carriage of the King of France was at the door of the palace of Versailles, awaiting his descent from his apartment. It was surrounded, as usual, by a portion of the Hundred Swiss Guards. The king approached, followed by his attendants; he had placed one foot upon the step, when a stout young man pushed through the Swiss, and struck the king in his side with a small, long-bladed pocket knife, inflicting a slight wound, and terrifying him out of his senses. Being put to bed, he summoned his confessor, who remained with him a long time; he sent contrite messages to the queen; he ordered the Dauphin to preside for him at the council; and so panic-stricken was he that for ten days and nights he held no communication with the ingenious killer of his time.

Madame remained at home, desolate, torn with anxiety, stared at by impudent courtiers, who came in and out, "as if her boudoir were a church." From under her windows she heard execrations uttered by a mob less barbarous than the glittering crowd within. The Abbé de Bernis was much in tears; the son of Madame du Hausset went incessantly to and fro, spying, interviewing, reporting. Madame's own physician pronounced the wound the merest trifle. "If," said he, "the king were another man, he would go to a ball to-night." Meanwhile, the question of questions for her and her "court" was, Should she go or stay? In the ministry she had one friend and ally, Machault, guard of the seals, enemy of his colleague, D'Argenson, who was her enemy also. In this crisis, the two ministers united to crush her, and Machault allowed many days to pass before he came near her.

But at length he came, saluted her coldly, entered her cabinet, and remained closeted with her for half an hour. When

Sire

je rends a sa majesté ce premier volume ce nest pas moy
qui lay couvert d'encre. un petit mot de reflexion sur la misere
de l'esprit humain. jay relut aujourd'hy de cinq manieres differentes
un petit passage de la henriade sans pouvoir jamais retrouver
la maniere dont je lavois tourné il y a un mois. que ce que cela
prouve c'est que le genie nest jamais le meme, que on n'a jamais precisement
la meme pensée deux fois en sa vie, qu'il faut attendre continuellement
le moment heureux, quel chien de métier. mais il a des charmes:
et la solitude occupée est je crois la vie la plus heureuse,
mon pauvre genie tout usé baise tres humblement les pieds
et les ailes de votre

Voltaire

her bell rang, her friends found her in tears. "I must go," said she with broken voice; and her trunks were packed forthwith. But, in the nick of time, a lady of the court entered, and gave other advice, saying, "Who leaves the game loses it." Madame remained; the king returned to her; a scene of tears and tender reproaches restored her to more than the old influence, and in two days Machault and D'Argenson were dismissed and exiled. In three months the Abbé de Bernis was minister of foreign affairs; and he was followed soon by the Duke of Choiseul, another of madame's ministers, who remained long in power, and showed much ability in repairing the disasters of the war. Choiseul, a friend of the "philosophers," continued to be Voltaire's protector and correspondent after Madame de Pompadour's death, and indeed as long as he needed protection such as a minister of state could give. Thus the ascendency of Pompadour favored the interests of the philosophic band, though neither she nor the ministries she created were at all times sufficient to save them from persecution. She had not been many months in possession of the government before Voltaire began to negotiate for the acquisition of lands in France, and about the time of the Duke of Choiseul's accession to power (November, 1758) he bought the estate of Ferney.

The fright caused in France by the wounding of the king defies description; the modernized mind cannot conceive it; and the excitement continued after it was known to the public that the "assassin," Pierre Damiens, was a pious, fanatical servant, a Jansenist, driven mad by wild talk on every side about the Bull Unigenitus, — a poor lunatic, without accomplices, without plan, and without rational motive. So far as he had any purpose, it was to call the king's attention, in a very emphatic manner, to the awful state of religion in France, and rouse him to interfere on behalf of the orthodox faith. In his pocket were found thirty louis d'or and a neatly bound New Testament.

Need I say that Voltaire pounced upon that little volume as a falcon upon its prey? The day after the event, the minister D'Argenson dispatched to Les Délices a circumstantial account of it, such as he wished to appear in Voltaire's history of the reign; the king, of course, behaving with *sang froid et*

tranquillité. From this long narrative Voltaire selected that one item of the Testament upon which to ring the changes for all kings and princes to hear. "In his pocket," wrote D'Argenson, "he had a New Testament, in 12mo, of a pretty edition." In every variety of utterance at his command, Voltaire made this comment: "Go over the whole history of Christian assassins, — and it is very long, — and you will see that they have all had the *Bible* in their pockets with their daggers, and never *Cicero*, *Plato*, or *Virgil*." Again, "Damiens is a dog gone mad from hearing convulsionist and Jansenist dogs barking at random."

The treatment to which this bewildered, virtuous man was subjected will always merit particular consideration as a record of the age. Mr. Carlyle might well have begun his series of pictures of the French Revolution with the execution of Damiens, in March, 1757, by way of showing what the French people had to overcome in themselves before they could so much as think of roughly handling a king. From the hour of his arrest to the moment of his death, a period of two months and twenty-three days, he was in torture whenever he was awake, so cruelly was he bound, chained, and confined. When, at last, the day of his execution came, he was taken in the morning to the torture-chamber, and there subjected to the greatest amount of anguish which the human frame is capable of enduring. The torture was administered with care and skill, so as to keep the poor wretch in the ecstasy of anguish as long as possible; surgeons standing by to aid the torturers in their fell work by giving them timely notice of coming insensibility, when the wedge would be withdrawn a few moments, and then reinserted, and driven gently home as he could bear it. Two hours of this; then rest, food, and wine. At three in the afternoon, he was taken to the place of execution by ways so circuitous that he was an hour and a half in reaching it; a small army guarding him, and all Paris in the streets to see him pass. The hellish apparatus of his execution not being ready, he was kept waiting half an hour longer, in full view of the preparations. At five, in the presence of a countless, unpitying multitude, many of whom were women, and some of high rank, who had ostentatiously sought good places he was bound, naked, upon a solid table placed on a lofty

platform. First, his right hand, with which he had struck the king, was burnt off; next, masses of flesh were torn from him by red-hot pincers, and melted lead and rosin poured into the wounds; lastly, a strong horse was attached to each of his four limbs, and an attempt was made to tear him to pieces. After a considerable period, it was found impossible to do this; and a message was sent for permission to cut the muscles of the joints, to facilitate the execution of this part of the sentence. This was refused; and the attempt was renewed, and was again unsuccessful. A second time word was dispatched that the horses could not tear the dying wretch asunder. The required permission was then given, and the muscles were severed; but it was not until both legs and one arm had been torn off that the prisoner expired.

From the moment when the execution began until he breathed his last was a period of an hour and a quarter. His body was burned; and the house which he had inhabited was purchased of its proprietor, and destroyed. The king not merely permitted this, but he rewarded extravagantly every person who had taken a leading part in the trial and execution. To each of the two judges who sentenced Damiens a pension for life of six thousand francs a year was granted. The lawyers, the torturers, the clerks, and the executioners were all bountifully recompensed; "more so," says Voltaire, "than officers who shed their blood for their country."

But the most awful fact of the case was that France approved the punishment, and Europe did not condemn it. When next the king appeared in public, though he had long ago lost the love of the people, he was greeted with all the enthusiasm to which he had been accustomed in the early years of his reign. He seemed to have regained his popularity, and to be again Louis the Well-Beloved. Some months after, a royal prince was born; and the king named him the Count D'Artois, "to console," as he said, "the province of that name for having given birth to such a monster, and to assure it of his continued protection." And all this occurred so recently that living men have seen that prince when he afterwards reigned over France as Charles X.

When we shudder at the sharp, short work of the guillotine, thirty-five years after, it is but just to think of the fate of

Pierre Damiens, and the pitiful disputes which crazed him. If the Jacobins did not torture, as well as kill, it was not because they had not had lessons in the practice; and the wildest of their utterances was holy wisdom's self compared with the folly of which the Bull Unigenitus was the central piece. Robespierre and his club soon passed, but that baleful thing tormented and corrupted France for two centuries.

Behold Pompadour, then, from being mistress of Louis, become mistress of France, and Voltaire deriving substantial advantage from her new ascendency. She not only made him safe on French soil, but, to his great astonishment, she procured for him the renewal of his ancient pension of two thousand francs, which had been for several years unpaid, unclaimed, and almost forgotten. The Duke of Choiseul, also, caused the king to confirm, by special patent, the exemption of his Ferney estate from all taxation, — an exemption granted to a former proprietor by Henry IV. for some service unknown. In the whole kingdom, as the lord of Ferney frequently remarked, there were but two secular estates that enjoyed this privilege. Voltaire knew well the significance and protective force of such trifles; he valued them accordingly, and found opportunity erelong to testify his gratitude in a public and striking manner. With the Abbé de Bernis, the rosy "Babet" of his Paris days, he remained on terms of curious familiarity. When he wrote to congratulate him upon the red hat of cardinal, received in 1758, he still jested with him upon his old nickname and the rosy roundness of his cheeks. "Your Eminence," said he, "must be tired of compliments turning upon the color of your coat, — a color which I used to see upon your plump cheeks, and which, I think, must be upon them still. . . . . Pardon the old Swiss his garrulity. May your Eminence preserve for him the favorable regard with which the lovely 'Babet' used to honor him."

At the very time when Damiens's penknife was giving Madame de Pompadour the power to "protect" the old Swiss, he was placed in relations with another of the belligerent courts, that of Elizabeth, Empress of Russia, — a connection that grew more intimate and confidential to the end of his life. The empress invited him to come to Petersburg and write a history of her father, Peter the Great, — a subject which had attracted

him ever since, as a young man of twenty-two, he had seen the Czar Peter rushing about Paris, sight-seeing. The invitation came to him through the Count of Bestucheff, the Russian ambassador at Paris, to whom he thus replied, in February, 1757: —

"Monsieur, I have received a letter which at first I thought written at Versailles, or in our Academy; it was you, monsieur, who did me the honor to address it to me. You propose to me what I have desired for thirty years; I cannot better conclude my career than in consecrating my last labors and my last days to such a work.

"I would make the journey to Petersburg if my health permitted it; but, in my present condition, I see that I shall be reduced to await in my retreat the material which you are pleased to promise me.

"This would be my plan: I would begin the work by a description of the flourishing condition in which the empire of Russia is to-day, including all that renders Petersburg agreeable to foreigners. I would describe the changes made at Moscow, the armies of the empire, its commerce, arts, and all that has made the government respectable.

"Then I should say, All this is a new creation; and I should enter upon the subject by making known the creator of those prodigies. My design, then, would be to give a precise idea of what the Emperor Peter the Great accomplished from his accession, year by year.

"If the Count of Schowalow [minister] will have the goodness, monsieur, as you flatter me he will, to send me documents upon those two subjects, — that is to say, upon the present condition of the empire, and upon all that Peter the Great performed, — with a map of Petersburg, one of the empire, the history of the discovery of Kamtschatka, and, in short, information upon everything which can contribute to the glory of your country, I shall not lose a moment, and I shall regard this labor as the consolation and glory of my old age.

"The series of medals which are offered me would be useless; they are to be found in several collections, and the material of those medals is of a value which I cannot accept. I could wish only that the Count of Schowalow would be pleased to assure me that her majesty the empress desires this monument to be raised to the glory of the emperor her father, and that she is willing to accept my pains."

All was done by the Russian government that an author could desire. The medals were sent him, notwithstanding his objection, and documents continued to arrive. He set about

this new task, at the age of sixty-four, with the alacrity of a young man whose fame and fortune depended upon his success. He gave Count Schowalow his idea of what such a work ought to be: No details of war, unless those details illustrate something great and useful; no anecdotes of private life, unless they are characteristic of general manners; human weaknesses of the subject not to be concealed, especially when by overcoming them he has given a useful example,— the sole worthy end of all such writing being to correct and improve mankind. To give himself more freedom to omit and admit, he proposed to call the work, not the Life or History of Peter I., but "Russia under Peter I." Such a title, he remarked, relieved him of the obligation to relate anecdotes which would diminish the glory of the Czar. In the course of the summer, we find him undertaking to find a home in Geneva for four young men whom the Russian government proposed to send to study in the land of Calvin.

In two years he published the first volume, one half the work, executed according to his plan and his principles. It revealed Russia to Europe and to herself; for he, and he alone, has possessed the art, in writing at the request of an autocrat, to utter the substantial truth concerning his subject, without giving offense or alarm. He knew how to make the homage acceptable to the empress which was implied in telling the truth about her father's faults. He concluded by saying that, to *the Russians* Peter was a great man, and that *they* ought to regard him as such. In all Russia, let him be a hero. "But is he a hero to us? No; but he was a king, and a king badly reared; and he accomplished what, perhaps, a thousand sovereigns in his place would not have done. . . . . There are still vast regions in Africa where men have need of a Czar Peter."

I add one sentence from the description of St. Petersburg: "Thirty-five large churches are so many ornaments of the city, and among those churches there are five for foreigners, whether they be Roman Catholics, Reformed, or Lutherans: these are five temples erected to Tolerance, and so many examples to other nations."

In these peaceful labors he passed the years, while war ravaged the heart of Europe and made the wilds of America more

savage still. One incident of the war touched him nearly in the first weeks of 1757. His old friend and "protector," the Duke of Richelieu, had risen suddenly to the height of popularity by his conquest of the island of Minorca, against the British fleet under command of Admiral Byng. The English ministry brought the admiral to trial on charges of treason and cowardice in presence of the enemy,— charges which tended to impair the lustre of Richelieu's exploit. Twenty years before, Voltaire had been intimate in England with the accused officer, then young in the service, and noted only as the son of Viscount Torrington, an admiral of old renown. Voltaire now wrote to Richelieu, suggesting that he should make an attempt to save his unfortunate antagonist by bearing testimony to his good conduct. Richelieu did this by writing a letter to Voltaire himself, in which he declared that Admiral Byng had done all that became a patriot and an officer, and that such was the opinion of the French fleet and army, witnesses of his conduct. On receiving this letter, he sent it directly to Byng himself, with a note of his own, in which he concealed their old intimacy, lest his interference should be attributed to personal regard: [1] —

"MONSIEUR, — Though scarcely known to you, I yet think it my duty to send you a copy of a letter which I have recently received from Marshal Richelieu; honor, humanity, justice, require me to transmit it to your hands. This testimony, so noble and so unexpected, of one of the most sincere and generous of my countrymen, gives me confidence that your judges will render you the same justice."

He appears to have sent other documents to England exculpatory of the accused officer, and wrote urgent letters to friends, suggesting measures in his behalf. Nothing availed. "The city of London," as Macaulay remarks, "called for vengeance, and the cry was echoed from every corner of the kingdom." A timid ministry sought to appease the public with a victim, and thus Byng was executed "for an error of judgment, such as the greatest commanders have often committed, and have often acknowledged." [2]

Byng left grateful messages both to Richelieu and Voltaire,

[1] Voltaire to Count de Schornberg, October 31, 1769.

[2] Macaulay on Thackeray's Chatham, Edinburgh Review, 1834.

saying that the justice rendered him by "so generous a soldier" consoled him for the injustice of his own countrymen, and that he died the debtor of Voltaire also, to whom he sent a copy of his defense. All parties, as well English as French, united in commending the worthy endeavors of the Frenchmen to save an unfortunate enemy.

The noise of the war filled the earth. Voltaire himself, who hated war, was all aflame with patriotic enthusiasm, and went so far as to invent an engine of massacre, upon the plan of the Assyrian war chariots of old. He thought highly of his scheme, and mentioned it to an officer, who also approved it, and who sped away to Paris with a model for the inspection of the minister of war. The minister, too, deemed it worthy of consideration, and the inventor wrote to Richelieu, urging him to take it under his protection, and win a campaign with it against the Prussians. Six hundred men and six hundred horses, with these chariots of Cyrus, well loaded with hand-grenades, would destroy, he flattered himself, an army of ten thousand Prussians, provided the enterprise were managed by a man of pliant genius, like Richelieu, instead of a man of routine. "I know very well," he wrote to his hero, "that it is not my business to find out the most convenient way of killing men. But if a monk, with some charcoal, sulphur, and saltpetre, changed the art of war throughout this ill-conditioned globe, why should not a paper-smudger like myself render a little service to his country, *incognito?*"

His Assyrian chariots were not tried until, instead of hand-grenades, they carried the devilish machinery of the *mitrailleuse*. It is by no means certain that his idea, even without that development, might not have been of use; for he designed his chariots to serve also as an adjunct to the artillery, and transport ammunition and forage. "It was," said he, "by conveying forage upon wagons, before there was any grass upon the ground, that the King of Prussia entered Bohemia by four roads, and struck terror. Rely upon it, Marshal Saxe would have used these war chariots of mine!"

During the whole of this war of seven years, he was in frequent correspondence with the King of Prussia, who seemed drawn towards him by an impulse he could not resist. In the direst extremity of his fortunes, when he had lost, for the mo-

ment, the hope of saving his kingdom, still he found relief in inditing long epistles in prose and verse to the idol of his youth. Voltaire replied with the forms of homage; but he could not forget Frankfort, Freytag, Schmidt, and the stolen effects, — least of all, the indignities done to Madame Denis, who now sat at his table, and did not fail to keep him in mind of what she had suffered. It is evident that six lines of good-humored apology to Madame Denis from the king — which the king owed to himself as much as to her — would have drawn the sting from this rankling wound; but Frederic, in an affair involving the duty of a man to a woman, was little more than the son of his father.

A few brief passages from their letters during these years of vicissitude will not be unwelcome to the reader. After the terrible reverses of the Prussians in the campaign of 1757, the king wrote in a despairing strain, intimating that he was resolved to die by his own hand rather than give his enemies the triumph of disposing of his destiny. Voltaire endeavored to argue him out of this idea.

"You wish to die! On the other hand, listen to your better reason. It tells you that you are not humiliated, and that you cannot be. It tells you that, being a man like another, there will remain to you, whatever happens, all that which can render other men happy, — estates, dignities, friends. A man who is only a king can think himself very unfortunate when he loses provinces; but a philosopher can do without provinces. . . . . I have no interest in all that I say to you except the public good and yours. I am near my sixty-fifth year; I was born infirm; I have only a moment to live; I have been very unfortunate, as you know; but I should die happy if I left you upon the earth putting in practice what you have so often written."

The king soon rallied, and, in his next letter (November, 1757), sent the verses which have been so often quoted and so much admired, ending, —

> "Pour moi, menacé du naufrage,
> Je dois, en affrontant l'orage,
> Penser, vivre, et mourir en roi."[1]

[1] For my part, threatened with shipwreck, I must, facing the storm, think, live, and die like a king.

During the next campaign the Margravine of Bayreuth sent him ample details of her brother's exploits and varying fortune; but, soon after its close, she died, and the king earnestly besought him to perpetuate her memory by an ode worthy of her. Voltaire composed the poem, and sent it to the king, who acknowledged it thus, March 12, 1759: —

"I have received that ode, which cost you so little, which is very beautiful, and which certainly will do you no dishonor. It gives me the first moment of consolation I have had in five months. I pray you to have it printed, and to spread it in the four quarters of the globe. I shall not long delay to testify to you my gratitude for it. . . . . You wish to know what Néaulme [Berlin publisher] is publishing. You ask *me* that question, who know not if Néaulme is still in the world; me, who have not in nearly three years put foot in Berlin; me, who know no other news than that of Russian and Austrian generals, — a kind of men for whom you care very little, and concerning whom I should be very glad not to be obliged to inform myself. Adieu. Live happily, and maintain the peace in your Swiss manor; for wars of the pen and wars of the sword rarely have happy issues. I know not what will be my destiny this year. In case of misfortune, I recommend myself to your prayers, and I ask of you a mass to get my soul out of purgatory, if, in the other world, there is a worse purgatory than the life I lead in this."

The reply to this letter has not been preserved; but Frederic gathered from it an erroneous impression, which Voltaire at once endeavored to correct. The king had spoken of his intention to show his gratitude to the poet for the ode to his sister, and he inferred from Voltaire's answer that the poet wanted the cross and key, which he had worn at Berlin, and of which he had been rudely deprived at Frankfort. Not so.

"Your majesty [he wrote, March 27, 1759] says to me, in your last letter, that it seems I desire only the baubles of which you do me the honor to speak to me. It is true that, after more than twenty years' attachment, you *might* have refrained from taking away the marks of your favor, which had no other value in my eyes except that which was derived from the hand that gave them. I should not be able even to wear those marks of my ancient devotion to you during the war, as my lands are in France. It is true, they are upon the frontiers of Switzerland; it is even true that they are entirely free, and I pay nothing to France. I have in France property which yields sixty thousand francs of annual revenue, and my sovereign has

preserved for me by brevet the place of gentleman-in ordinary of his chamber. . . . . You have never known me. I am very far from asking you for the bagatelles for which you believe I have so much desire. I do not wish them at all; I wish only your favor. . . . . I always told you the truth when I said to you that I wished to die near you. Your majesty treats me like the rest of the world; you mock me when you say that President Maupertuis is dying. The president has just had at Basle a lawsuit for the maintenance of a child. Would to God that I could have such a lawsuit! I am far from it; I have been very sick, and I am very old.

"I confess that I am very rich, very independent, very happy; but you are wanting to my happiness; and I shall soon die without having seen you. You care little for that, and I try not to care for it at all. I love your verses, your prose, your understanding, your hardy and firm philosophy. I was not able to live without you, nor with you. I am not now speaking to the king, to the hero; that is the affair of sovereigns. I am speaking to him who enchanted me, whom I loved, and with whom I am always angry" [*fâché*].

This was a little plainer language than he had ever before written to the king. Frederic replied in a tone still more decisive: —

"I congratulate you upon being once more gentleman-in-ordinary of the Well-Beloved. It will not be *his* patent which will immortalize you. . . . . For my part, I pardon, in favor of your genius, all the tricks you played me at Berlin, all the libels of Leipsic, and all the things which you have said and printed against me, forcible, hard, and numerous as they are, without preserving the least rancor. It is not the same with my poor president, in whom you fixed your grip. I know not whether he is begetting children or bleeding at the lungs. Nevertheless one cannot but applaud him if he labors at the propagation of the species, when all the powers of Europe are striving to destroy it. . . . . Adieu, Swiss Hermit! Do not be angry with Don Quixote, who threw into the fire the verses of Ariosto, which were not as good as yours; and have some indulgence for a German censor, who writes to you from the farthest confines of Silesia."

In another letter of nearly the same date, the king complains bitterly of the ferocities of the war: —

"The most polite nations carry on the contest like ferocious beasts. I am ashamed of human kind; I blush for the age. Let us confess the truth: the arts and philosophy are known only to a small number, while the great mass — the people and the ordinary members of the

aristocracy — remain what nature made them; that is to say, wicked animals. Whatever reputation you have, my dear Voltaire, think not that the Austrian hussars know your writings. I can assure you that they are better judges of brandy than of beautiful verses and celebrated authors. We are going to begin soon a campaign which will be at least as rude as the last. God knows what will be the issue of it. But there is one thing I can assure you of positively: it is that they will not get me cheap; and that, if I fall, the enemy will have to break the road to my destruction by a frightful carnage. Adieu. I wish you everything which I lack. N. B. It is said that your poem upon the 'Religion of Nature,' the 'Philosophy of Good Sense,' and the work of Helvetius upon the 'Human Mind' have been publicly burned at Paris. Admire how self-love flatters itself! I draw a kind of glory from the fact that the epoch of the war which France wages against me is the same as that of the war waged at Paris against 'Good Sense.'"

Voltaire replied, June, 1759: "Again, I say, Oh, that you would put an end to this terrible war! You are legislator, warrior, historian, poet, musician; but you are also a philosopher. Home! home! home! as soon as you can."

Frederic, who wished nothing so much as to be able to follow this advice, answered, July 2, 1759: —

"You mock me when you talk to me of making peace. I do not give law to the Well-Beloved, to the Queen of Hungary, whom I adore, to the Russian empress, whom I abhor. . . . . I love peace as much as you desire it; but I wish it good, solid, and honorable. . . . . Adieu. Health and prosperity to the author of the 'Henriade,' the most malign and the most seductive of the men of genius who have ever been or ever will be in the world." [Some days after.] "Enjoy your hermitage; trouble not the ashes of those (Maupertuis, for example) who repose in the tomb; let death at least put an end to your unjust hatreds. Think that kings, after having fought for a long time, make peace at last. Will *you* never be able to make peace? I believe you would be capable, like Orpheus, of descending to hell, not to persuade Pluto, not to bring back the lovely Emilie, but to pursue into that place of torment an enemy whom your rancor persecuted too much in this world. Sacrifice to me your vengeance; do an action worthy of the beautiful maxims which you express with so much elegance and force in your works."

These repeated allusions to the affair with Maupertuis, all of them, as Voltaire thought, showing the most complete per-

versity of judgment on the king's part, roused him at length to something like a burst of indignation. Thus he wrote to Frederic, April 21, 1760 : —

"SIRE, — A little monk of Saint-Juste said to Charles V., 'Sacred majesty, are you not tired of troubling the world? Must you still distress a poor monk in his cell?' I am the monk ; but you have not yet renounced the grandeur and miseries of the world, like Charles V. What cruelty in you to say to me that I calumniate Maupertuis! What interest have I to speak ill of him? What do his person and his memory concern me? I think only of dying, and my hour draws near; do not trouble it by unjust reproaches and hard sayings, which I feel the more because it is from you they come. You have done me wrong enough: you embroiled me forever with the King of France; you made me lose my offices and my pensions; you maltreated me at Frankfort, me and an innocent woman, — a woman esteemed, who was drawn in the mud and put into prison ; and then, while honoring me with your letters. you spoil the sweetness of that consolation by bitter reproaches. Is it possible that it was you who treated me so, after I had been occupied for three years, although uselessly, in trying to serve you, without any other view than that of following my way of thinking?

"The greatest evil which your works have done is that they have enabled the enemies of philosophy, spread throughout Europe, to say, Philosophers cannot live in peace, and cannot live together. Behold a king who does not believe in Jesus Christ! He calls to his court a man who also does not believe in him ; and he maltreats him! There is no humanity in the pretended philosophers, and God punishes some of them by the aid of others.

"This is what is said; this is what is printed on all sides ; and while the fanatics are united, the philosophers are dispersed and unhappy. While, at the court of Versailles and elsewhere, I am accused of having encouraged you to write against the Christian religion, it is you who make me these reproaches, and add that triumph to the insults of fanatics! It is this which makes me hold the world in just horror. I am, happily, far from the world in my solitary domains. I shall bless the day when I shall cease, by dying, to have to suffer, and especially to suffer through you; but I shall die wishing you a happiness not possible, perhaps, in your rank, and which philosophy alone could have procured for you in the storms of your life, if fortune had permited you to confine yourself to cultivating for a long time that foundation of wisdom which you have in you, — an admirable foundation, but perverted by the passions inseparable from a

great imagination, a little by bad temper, by painful situations which poured gall into your soul, and finally by the unfortunate pleasure which you have always taken in humiliating other men by saying and writing to them sharp things, — a pleasure unworthy of you, and so much the more unworthy as you are elevated above them by your rank and by your singular talents. You doubtless feel these truths.

"Pardon them as uttered by an old man who has little time to live, and who says them to you with so much the more confidence, because, being aware of his own defects and weaknesses, infinitely greater than yours, but less dangerous through his obscurity, he cannot be suspected by you of believing himself exempt from faults in order to give himself the right to complain of some of yours. He laments your faults as much as he does his own; and he wishes only to think of repairing before his death the fatal errors resulting from a deceptive imagination, while cherishing sincere wishes that so great a man as you may be as happy and as great in everything as he ought to be."

Frederic, with six hundred thousand soldiers upon his hands, found time, in May, 1760, to write a long reply to this epistle: —

"I know very well [said he] that I have faults, and even great faults. I assure you that I am not indulgent toward myself, and that when I look within I forgive myself nothing. But I confess that this labor would be less unfruitful if I were in a situation where my soul was not obliged to suffer shocks so sudden and agitations so violent as those to which it has been exposed for a long time, and to which it will again, probably, be exposed. Peace has flown away with the butterflies; there is no more question of it at all. On all sides new efforts are making, as if we were going to fight to all eternity.

"I do not enter into a rehearsal of the past. You have doubtless been guilty of the greatest wrongs toward me. Your conduct would not have been borne by any philosopher. I have forgiven you all, and I even wish to forget all; but if you had not had to do with a fool [*fou*] in love with your beautiful genius, you would not have come off nearly as well as you did. Consider it, then, a thing said, once for all: I will not hear that niece of yours spoken of again; she bores me, and she has not as much merit as her uncle to atone for her faults. The servant of Molière is spoken of; but no one will ever speak of the niece of Voltaire. . . . .

"Adieu. Live in peace in your retreat, and talk not of dying. You are only sixty-two, and your soul is still full of that fire which animates bodies and sustains them. You will see me underground; yes, and half the present generation besides. You will have the pleasure

of making a malign couplet upon my tomb, and I shall not mind it; I give you absolution for it in advance. You will not do ill to prepare matter for it even now; perhaps you will be able to use it sooner than you believe. For my part, I shall go down below there to tell Virgil there is a Frenchman who has surpassed him in his art. I shall say the same to Sophocles and Euripides. I shall speak to Thucydides of your history, to Quintus Curtius of your 'Charles XII.;' and I shall get myself stoned, perhaps, by all those dead men, jealous that a single individual has united in himself their different merits. But Maupertuis, to console them, will make Zoïle read in a corner the Akakia.

"It is necessary to put a *remora* in letters which one writes to indiscreet people; for it is the only way to hinder them from reading those letters at the street corners and in open market."

This letter, we should think, would have ended their correspondence forever, or, at least, as long as Madame Denis poured out Voltaire's chocolate at Ferney. On the contrary, these frank utterances, so unusual between king and citizen, appear to have relieved both their minds, and they continued to write as before. Voltaire protested, in reply to the hint of his indiscretion, that he had never shown or read the king's letters to a mortal, — a falsehood which had some excuse in the fact that he was corresponding with a public enemy. On one occasion, in 1759, he felt compelled, from a due regard to his own head, to disclose the contents of a large packet of Frederic's prose and verse, among which was an ode, signed "Frédéric," which satirized Louis the Well-Beloved without reserve, speaking of him as "a feeble monarch, the plaything of Pompadour," sunk in ignoble sloth at Versailles. On receiving this packet, he discovered, to his horror and alarm, that it had been opened on its way from Prussia. If this ode should be published, there were couplets in it which all the world would believe had been written or retouched by him. The King of France, he thought, would be sure to believe it, and hold him guilty of high treason; "and, even *worse*," as he remarks, "culpable toward Madame de Pompadour." He sent for the French Resident at Geneva and showed him the packet. The Resident certified that the seal had been evidently tampered with, and advised him that there was no other part to take but to send the whole to the Duke of Choiseul, then at the head of the French ministry. Choiseul, himself a versifier,

made light of the ode, and even replied to it in some verses well calculated to irritate the Prussian king. These he sent to Voltaire, and told him he should publish them if Frederic's ode appeared in print. Choiseul alluded to the miserable childhood of Frederic, whom "a *just* father wished to stifle in his cradle," and replied to his mention of Pompadour by observing that Frederic, in condemning the tenderness of the King of France for his mistress, was speaking of what he had never experienced, and *could* know nothing about.

"I might," says Voltaire, "if I had wished to divert myself, have seen the King of France and the King of Prussia waging a war of verses; which would have been a new scene in the world. I gave myself another pleasure, — that of being wiser than Frederic. I wrote to him that his ode was exceedingly fine, but that he ought not to give it to the public, as he did not stand in need of that kind of glory, and ought not to shut every door of reconciliation with the King of France, embittering him past remedy, and forcing him to put forth the utmost exertions to obtain a just vengeance. I added that my niece had burned his ode, in the mortal fear of its being imputed to me. He believed me, and thanked me, not without some reproaches for having burned the finest verses he had ever written in his life. The Duke of Choiseul, on his part, kept his word, and was discreet."

Voltaire improved this opening to urge both belligerents to make peace; and the French minister wrote him several letters, designed to be communicated to Frederic, in which that king was covertly solicited to make overtures. The burden of Voltaire's letters to Frederic for several months was the peaceful dispositions of Choiseul. Frederic, menaced on every side by powerful foes, and worn down in health and resources by four years of fiercest warfare, met these insincere and trivial advances with magnificent disdain.

"You speak to me always of peace [he wrote, June 21, 1760]. I shall make no peace without the English, and they will make no peace without me. What signifies that pacific tone which your Duke of Choiseul affects toward me? You tell me he cannot act according to his way of thinking. What matters to me his way of thinking, if he is not free to conduct himself in accordance therewith? I abandon the tripod of Versailles to the craft of those who amuse themselves

with intrigues. I have no time to lose in these futilities; and, though I perish, I would rather apply to the Grand Mogul than to Louis the Well-Beloved to help me out of the labyrinth in which I find myself. I said nothing against him (that is, before the war). I repent bitterly having written in verse more good of him than he deserved. And if, during the present war, of which I regard him as the promoter, I have not spared him in some pieces, it is because he has been guilty of outrage towards me, and because I defend myself with all the arms I have, however ill-sharpened they may be. These trifles, besides, are known to no one. I comprehend nothing of those personalities, unless you refer to the Pompadour. I believe, however, that a King of Prussia owes no regards to a Demoiselle Poisson, especially if she is arrogant, and is wanting in the respect due to crowned heads."

And so this war raged on. During the last two campaigns Frederic found little opportunity to write letters. Several times the family at Les Délices gave him up for lost, and often Madame Denis had the consolation of pitying him; until, through his own indomitable heart, the valor of his troops, the constancy of his subjects, the subsidies of the English, and the timely death of the Empress Elizabeth, he suddenly issued from the contest in 1763, a victor, his kingdom torn, bleeding, desolate, but Silesia his own, and himself free to write comic verses on whomsoever he would.

Apropos of the British subsidies, Voltaire preserves an anecdote of the moment when a storm drove the English fleet from the coast of France. "Well," said Frederic to the English ambassador, "what are you doing at present?" "We are letting God work," was the answer. "I did not know," said Frederic, "that you had that ally." The ambassador rejoined, "He is the only one we have to whom we pay no subsidies." "Also," said the king, "he is the only one who does not help you."

Not less amusing was Voltaire's alacrity in preparing to pursue Freytag and Schmidt whenever there was a prospect of a French army holding Frankfort. "If you pass by Frankfort," he wrote to Richelieu, early in the war, "Madame Denis earnestly entreats you to have the goodness to cause to be sent to her the four ears of two scoundrels: one named Freytag, Resident-without-wages of the King of Prussia at Frankfort, who has never had any compensation but what he has stolen; the

other is Schmidt, a rogue of a merchant, counselor of the King of Prussia." Later, when there seemed a probability of the Prince of Soubise taking the city, he urged Collini to bring suit for the stolen effects, and drew up forms of petition for him to sign and present to the French commander, promising to back his application with all the influence he could command. "Never," he wrote to D'Argental in August, 1759, "will I forgive Frederic's infamous treatment of my niece, nor his hardihood [*hardiesse*] in writing me flatteries twice a month without having repaired his wrongs."

It was under the spur of this feeling that he wrote at Les Délices the satirical memoirs of his connection with Frederic, which contain, along with much amusing narrative and innocent badinage, one or two passages of a character which nothing could justify, and of which he himself repented. These memoirs he fully intended to destroy, and did endeavor to destroy, when, in later years, he had recovered from his resentment. His secretary, Wagnière, tells us why he did not succeed: "The manuscript of his memoirs upon the King of Prussia was stolen from him in 1768. He had never shown them to any one whatever; but he had the unfortunate habit of leaving his library open and his papers exposed, notwithstanding the representations I made him. He discovered the theft of those memoirs and of some other manuscripts when, having burned the original, he looked for the two copies of my making, to burn them also."[1]

I may add that after the death of Maupertuis, in 1759, Frederic urged D'Alembert to accept the presidency of the Berlin Academy. "I advise you," wrote Voltaire to his friend, "never to go to Berlin and fill Maupertuis's place; you would repent of it." Upon D'Alembert's repeated refusals, the king made himself president, and retained the post as long as he lived. According to Voltaire, Maupertuis died in the odor of sanctity between two Capuchins. "He was sick a long time," added his old enemy, "of a repletion of pride; but I did not believe him to be either a hypocrite or an imbecile."

During this period, besides his work upon Peter of Russia, he continued to write articles for the Encyclopædia as long as it was permitted to appear, and did not forget his beloved

[1] 2 Mémoires sur Voltaire, 53.

dramatic art. In 1759, good taste and good sense won at Paris the tardy triumph of excluding spectators from the stage of the national theatre. The veteran dramatist was so exhilarated by this news that he began at once upon a new tragedy requiring ample room for its presentation, that "Tancrede" of his so familiar still to the stage of Christendom. The subject seized him with violence, and the first draft was written in a month. His letters boil with it. "To-day, my dear angel," he wrote to D'Argental, "is May 19 [1759], and it was on the 22d of April that an old fool began a tragedy, finished yesterday, — finished, but not done. . . . . The liberty and honor given to the French theatre warmed my old brain. Madame Denis and myself have cried over the piece; but we are too near relations of it, and we must not believe *our* tears. It is necessary to make my angels weep and flap their wings. You will have upon the stage flags borne in triumph, arms hung upon columns, processions of warriors, a poor girl exceedingly tender and resolute, and still more unhappy, the greatest and most unfortunate of men, a father in despair. The fifth act begins with a Te Deum, and ends with a De Profundis. . . . . Let us give the piece *incognito*. Let us once enjoy this pleasure; it is very amusing."

Thus in many letters he pours out his heart upon the new play, ever correcting, revising, recasting, as though he really were "the young, unknown author" to whom he meant to attribute it. It must be owned, however, that few unknown authors take half the trouble to succeed which this veteran never failed to take, whether he was composing a tragedy or a pamphlet.

CHAPTER XXII.

COUNTRY GENTLEMAN AND FARMER.

While Frederic was defending his throne with such resolution, Voltaire was tranquilly preparing an abode on the soil of his native country. He could not feel at home among the sons of Calvin, and, it appears, he did not feel quite safe. Calvinists are formidable people if they are once thoroughly roused. He had already provoked them nearly to the limit of their endurance, and Wagnière was daily copying things which, being published, might render his residence in Geneva untenable. "Your magistrates," he wrote in December, 1758, to M. Tronchin, of Lyons, "are respectable; they are wise; the society of Geneva is equal to that of Paris. But your people are a little arrogant, and your priests a little dangerous."

When the ascendency of Madame de Pompadour and her ministers gave him assurance that he might safely reside at least upon the outer edge of France, he thought first of retiring to Lorraine, the province assigned to Stanislas, "King of Poland," and he wrote to the king on the subject, saying that he had half a million francs to invest in lands, and contemplated buying an estate and habitation for his old age near his Marcus Aurelius. Stanislas consulted the French government upon the project, and the Duke de Choiseul replied, "Your majesty knows him well enough to decide for yourself." Erelong the Italian author, Bettinelli, arrived at Les Délices, charged with a mission from the King of Poland to Voltaire. Stanislas strongly desired his company and his half-million investment, and the Italian was to say how welcome both would be in Lorraine. Bettinelli has left us an amusing account of his first interview with Voltaire: —

"When I arrived at Les Délices [November, 1758] he was in his garden. I went towards him, and told him who I was. 'What!' cried he, 'an Italian, a Jesuit, a Bettinelli! This is too much honor for

my cabin. I am only a peasant, as you see,' he added, showing me his stick, which had a weeding-fork at one end and a pruning-knife at the other. 'It is with these tools that I sow my wheat like my salad, grain by grain; but my harvest is more abundant than that which I sow in books for the good of mankind.'

"His singular and grotesque appearance made an impression upon me for which I was not prepared. Under a cap of black velvet, which came down to his eyes, there was a big peruke, which covered three quarters of his face, making his nose and chin still more prominent than they are in his portraits. His person was enveloped in a pelisse from his head to his feet. His look and smile were full of expression. I told him of the pleasure I felt at finding him in so good a state of health, which allowed him to brave in this way the rigor of winter.

"'Oh! you Italians,' he replied, 'imagine that we must squat in our holes, like the marmots which inhabit the summits of those mountains of ice and snow; but your Alps are for us only a spectacle and a beautiful perspective. Here upon the borders of my Lake Leman, defended against the north wind, I do not envy you your lakes Como and Guarda. In this solitary place, I represent Catullus in his little island of Sirmio. He composed there beautiful elegies, and I write here good Georgics.'

"I then presented him the letter which the King of Poland had given me for him. At the first glance, I saw plainly that he divined the object of my visit, and that some epigram was about to fall upon my royal commission.

"'Oh, my dear,' cried he, taking the letter from my hands, 'stay with us! We breathe here the air of liberty, the air of immortality. I have just been investing a pretty large sum of money in the purchase of a little domain near this place. I think of nothing but to terminate there my life, far from scoundrels and tyrants.'

"These few words of the wily old man made me understand that the time had passed for entering into negotiations, and deprived me at one stroke of the honors of my embassy."[1]

The ambassador was only a few days too late. In the first half of November, 1758, Voltaire had agreed to buy, in fee simple, the ancient estate and seigneury of Ferney, in Burgundy, on the northern shore of Lake Leman, about three miles and a half from Geneva. The village of Ferney was then a mere hamlet of forty or fifty inhabitants, who were very poor and much oppressed, as all peasants then were. The

[1] Voltaire aux Délices, par Desnoiresterres, page 331.

château was so old and inadequate that the purchaser set about rebuilding it forthwith, himself being both architect and superintendent of the works. He was well content with the result of his labors; and indeed he produced, with remarkable celerity, a plain, roomy, substantial stone mansion, of fourteen bedrooms, in what he flattered himself was "the Italian taste." "It is not a palace," he wrote, "but a commodious country house, with lands adjacent, which produce much hay, wheat, straw, and oats. I have some oaks as straight as pines, which touch the sky, that would render great service to our navy, if we had one." He had also a little ugly old parish church too close to his house, to which there was a curé, and he was seigneur over all, with the rights and privileges appertaining to seigneury. He pushed on his château with such energy and diligence that he could have removed to it in the summer of 1759, if a stress of politics had made it desirable.

He was going to be a farmer in his declining years. The out-of-door occupations, in which he had indulged during his residence in Switzerland, had so improved his health that he resolved to continue and increase them. He told his friends that his way of life in his retreat had benefited him essentially. "Four years ago," he wrote in 1759, to his old friend Cideville, "I made my arrangements to die; but I find myself stronger than I have ever been, building, planting, rhyming, and writing the history of that Russian empire which avenges and humiliates us." And he wrote to D'Argental, "I complain according to custom; but in truth I am astonishingly well, and so happy amid the public calamities that I am ashamed of myself." To his fee-simple of Ferney, therefore, he immediately added a life-purchase of the adjacent seigneury of Tourney, consisting of a large farm and an old château; or, to use the terms of the agreement, "the château, estate, and seigneury of Tourney, barns, stables, meadows, fields, high vines and low vines, woods, forest, honorary seignorial rights," etc.; for which he was to pay a sum equal to ten years' rent, or thirty-five thousand francs, and make permanent improvements to the value of twelve thousand francs more.[1]

A herd of cows was part of this purchase; he became a raiser of cattle, and employed a force of sixteen working oxen

[1] Voltaire et le Président De Brosses, page 45.

on his farms. At Les Délices he had begun the establishment of a breeding stable for horses, and this he now enlarged, increasing his six mares to ten. The Marquis de Voyer, the steward of the French king's stables, hearing of this new taste of the author of "Zaïre," offered him a fine stallion, which the poet accepted. "My seraglio is ready," he wrote to the marquis in May, 1759; "nothing is wanting but the sultan which you have promised me. So much has been written of late upon population that I wish at least to people the land of Gex with horses, being little able to have the honor of increasing my own species." In these various operations he kept thirty persons in continual employment, and maintained upon his estates, in all, as Wagnière informs us, more than sixty.

Nor was he one of the amateur farmers whose potatoes cost them, as Washington Irving used to say of his own, "sixpence apiece." He appears to have had farms which were as profitable as they were beautiful, and he assures us that he managed all the details of their culture himself. His letters for the next ten years teem with allusions to his farming. He exulted in his great barn, filled with the products of his lands: —

"A vast rustic house, with wagons loaded with the spoils of the fields coming and going by four great gate-ways. The pillars of oak, which sustain the whole frame, are placed at equal distances upon pedestals of stone; long stables are seen on the right and on the left. Fifty cows, properly fastened, occupy one side, with their calves; the horses and oxen are on the other side; their fodder falls into their racks from immense mows above; the floors where the grain is threshed are in the middle, and you know that all the animals lodged in their several places in this great edifice have a lively sense that the forage, the hay, the oats, which it contains, belong to them of right. To the south of these beautiful monuments of agriculture are the poultry-yards and sheep-folds; to the north are the presses, store-rooms, fruit-houses; to the east are the abodes of the manager and thirty servants; toward the west extend large meadows, pastured and fertilized by all these animals, companions of the labor of man. The trees of the orchard, loaded with fruits, small and great, are still another source of wealth. Four or five hundred bee-hives are set up near a little stream which waters this orchard. The bees give to the possessor a considerable harvest of honey and wax, without his troubling himself with all the fables which are told of that industrious creature; without

endeavoring in vain to learn whether that nation lives under the rule of a pretended queen, who presents her subjects with sixty to eighty thousand children. There are some avenues of mulberry-trees as far as the eye can reach, the leaves of which nourish those precious worms which are not less useful than the bees. A part of this vast inclosure is formed by an impenetrable rampart of hawthorn, neatly clipped, which rejoices the senses of smell and sight."[1]

In other letters we see him a zealous and patriotic tree-planter, sending wagons all the way to Lyons for loads of young trees, and urging country friends to follow his example. He formed a nursery, also, from which he every year enriched his plantations. "It is certain," he wrote to the inspector-general of French nurseries, "that the forests of France have been too much neglected, as well as horse-breeding, and I fear that we shall soon be without the means of warming ourselves. I am planting walnut and chestnut trees, upon which I shall never see walnuts or chestnuts, but the mania of people of my kind is to labor for posterity." His plantations and his colts were among his favorite objects. As the years went on, he formed a park and gardens about his new abode, three miles in circuit, which reminded visitors of what they had seen in England, where rural tastes were already well-nigh universal. One traveler describes them thus: —

"The garden is very beautiful and very large, forming with the park an extensive inclosure. In the park there is a fine plantation of oaks, lindens, and poplars, besides beautiful and long avenues. The view is extremely fine. Here, there is foliage and shrubbery, always green; there, a verdant lawn surrounded with clumps of bushes. In the midst is a large and ancient linden, with dense foliage, which overshadows the shrubbery with its thick branches. This is called the cabinet of Voltaire; it is there that he works. Near by is a little building for silk-worms, which serve him for recreation. Not far from it is a lightning-rod, the chain of which descends into a fountain. Adjacent to the silk-worm house, there is a field, which is called Voltaire's field, because he cultivates it with his own hands. This park contains, besides, some beautiful labyrinths, a large peach orchard, lovely beds of flowers, vines of excellent grapes, kitchen and fruit gardens, the walls of which are entirely covered with pear-trees and peach-trees. Mont Blanc, which is seen covered with snow, and the gardens, filled with flowers on all sides, form a contrast difficult to find elsewhere, and

[1] Voltaire to Dupont. June, 1769.

afford an enchanting prospect. Near the château is a bath-house, a little marble edifice, supplied with hot and cold water at will, water being warmed in a boiler placed in a recess outside."

All this involved much out-of-door exercise, and he enjoyed it with a zest which the ordinary amateur little knows. For two or three years, he was full to overflowing of this new occupation of founding a great country home.

"I owe life and health [he wrote to Madame du Deffand] to the course I have taken. If I dared I would believe myself wise, so happy am I. I have lived only since the day when I chose my retreat; every other kind of life would now be insupportable to me. Paris is necessary to you; to me it would be mortal; every one must remain in his element. I am very sorry that mine is incompatible with yours, and it is assuredly my only affliction. You wished also to try the country; it is not suitable to you. The taste for proprietorship and labor is absolutely necessary when you live in the country. I have very extensive possessions, which I cultivate. I make more account of your drawing-room than of my grain-fields and my pastures; but it was my destiny to end my career between drills, cows, and Genevese."

To Cideville also: "I have adopted the scheme of investing part of my fortune in lands; the King of Prussia will not ravage them, and they will always bear a little grain. Property in paper depends upon fortune, property in land only upon God. If you manage your estate at Launai, you know that that occupation consumes a little time; but confess that you lose at Paris much more. I am managing all the detail of three estates almost contiguous to my hermitage of Les Délices; I have the insolence to build a château in the Italian taste. That will not hinder you, my old friend, from having your 'Peter the Great,' and a tragedy in a taste somewhat new."

He was particularly happy in the thought, Frenchman as he was, that he was no longer an exile from the land of his birth. An exile he was from Paris; and to a true Parisian that is exile in the most poignant sense of the word. But to the rest of Europe he was an exile no more; for he had houses and lands in France. He had even enjoyed a public and formal welcome to his seigneury of Tourney. "I made my entry," he wrote, like Sancho Panza into his island. Nothing was

wanting to me but his paunch. The curé harangued me. Chouet [previous tenant] gave me a splendid repast, in the taste of those of Horace and Boileau, provided by the eating-house keeper of the next village. The people frightened my horses with musketry and torpedoes; the girls brought me oranges in baskets decorated with ribbons." He was a Frenchman again! The strength of this feeling was shown in the promptness with which he corrected a remark upon his exile in one of Lord Lyttleton's Dialogues of the Dead, which appeared in 1760. One of these celebrated Dialogues was between Boileau and Pope, in the course of which Voltaire came under discussion and received very polite treatment. Boileau observes that France, too, besides England, had recently produced some excellent authors, chief among whom was Voltaire, whose fame resounded in all parts of Europe; to which Pope responds with that famous compliment: "Other writers excel in some one particular branch of wit or science; but when the King of Prussia drew Voltaire from Paris to Berlin, he had a whole academy of *belles-lettres* in him alone." Boileau assigns to Voltaire the origin of the new system of writing history, of which the aim was to exhibit the manners and condition of man, and the causes which have led to changes in either. Further on he laments the excessive freedoms of some of Voltaire's writings, and expresses a hope that Voltaire before his death will correct or suppress whatever in any of them tends to promote vice or impiety. Pope assenting, Boileau asks, "Has England been free from all seductions of this nature?" Pope replies, "No; but the French have the art of rendering vice and impiety more agreeable than the English." Boileau accepts the compliment to the talents of his countrymen, but hopes that both nations will agree in thinking that "true wisdom is virtue, and true virtue is religion." Pope concludes, "I would have the French be perpetual competitors with the English in manly wit and substantial learning. But let the competition be friendly."

In the first edition, Voltaire was spoken of as an exile. He was in the habit still of receiving and reading English books, and probably the Dialogues came in the same parcel as Tristram Shandy, the "book of the season" of 1760. Writing to Algarotti, in French, he adds three lines in English: "Have

you read 'Tristram Shandy?' This is a very unaccountable book, and an original one; they run mad about it in England." Upon reading the Dialogues, in which he was accused of writing too freely and of being an exile, he wrote to Lord Lyttleton a letter in his best English, dating it from "My castle of Ferney, in Burgundy."

"I have read the ingenious Dialogues of the Dead. I find page 134 that I am an *exile*, and guilty of some excesses in writing. I am obliged (and perhaps for the honour of my country) to say I am not an exile, because I have not committed the excesses the author of the Dialogues imputes to me.

"Nobody raised his voice higher than mine in favour of the rights of human kind, yet I have not exceeded even in that virtue.

"I am not settled in Switzerland, as he believes. I live on my own lands in France; retreat is becoming to old age, and more becoming in one's own possessions. If I enjoy a little country-house near Geneva, my manors and my castles are in Burgundy; and if my king has been pleased to confirm the privileges of my lands, which are free from all tributes, I am the more indebted to my king.

"If I were an *exile*, I should not have obtained from my court many a passport for English noblemen. The service I rendered to them entitles me to the justice I expect from the noble author.

"As for religion, I think, and I hope he thinks with me, that God is neither a presbyterian, nor a lutheran, nor of the low church, nor of the high church, but God is the father of the noble author and mine.

"I am, with respect, his most humble servant, VOLTAIRE,
Gentleman of the King's Chamber."

The English author's reply, though doubtless civilly intended, was not quite agreeable to Voltaire. Lord Lyttleton promised to correct the error complained of, but held to his intimation of impiety, and made light of the honors bestowed by the King of France: —

"To do you justice is a duty I owe to truth and myself; and you have a much better title to it than from the *passports* you say you have procured for English noblemen. You are entitled to it, sir, by the high sentiments of respect I have for you, which are not paid to the *privileges* you tell me your king has confirmed to your lands, but to the *noble talents* God has given you, and the superior rank you hold in the republic of letters. The favors done you by your sovereign are an honor to *him*, but add little lustre to the name of Voltaire. I

entirely agree with you 'that God is the father of all mankind,' and should think it blasphemy to confine his goodness to a sect; nor do I believe that any of his creatures are good in his sight, if they do not extend their benevolence to all his creation. These opinions I rejoice to see in your works, and shall be very happy to be convinced that the liberty of your thoughts and your pen upon subjects of philosophy and religion never exceeded the bounds of this generous principle, which is authorized by revelation as much as by reason; or that you disapprove in your hours of sober reflection any irregular sallies of fancy, which cannot be *justified*, though they may be *excused*, by the vivacity and fire of a great genius."

To this Voltaire replied in French, being obliged by indisposition to dictate his answer: —

"Permit me only to observe that it is not a mere *I say* that I have caused passports to be obtained for some English gentlemen, but that *it is true*. I have been so happy as to procure passports for the son of Mr. Fox and all Mr. Campbell's family, as well as for three other sick Englishmen, who had been recommended to me by Dr. Tronchin. To me it is both a duty and a pleasure to serve any gentleman of your nation; this is the only right I have to your favors, though every man derives the same from your justice. I presume, therefore, to entreat your lordship to be so kind as to cause to be printed at the end of your book, as well as in all the public papers, the annexed little billet. Your lordship would not, I am sure, have me die with a complaint in my mouth against the person I esteem the most of any living.

"'We were mistaken, in page 134 of the Dialogues, in saying that M. de Voltaire was banished from France on account of his writings. He still resides in that kingdom, in the county of Tourney, of which he is lord. This county is a free district in Burgundy, in the neighborhood of Geneva, and the owner has never been exiled.'"

As this note does not appear in the editions accessible, the author may not have complied with the request in all its extent; and the less as the reading world could not have been ignorant that Voltaire had been exiled many times.

From 1758 to 1764 he was still an occasional resident of Geneva, but gradually withdrew from the soil of that republic, to settle finally at Ferney. He was never in such exuberant spirits as at this time, never in such excellent health, never engaged in so many affairs, never so prompt with pen and deed in the promotion of his objects.

CHAPTER XXIII.

VISITORS AT LES DÉLICES.

BEFORE entering upon the most important period of his career, let us pause a moment, and accompany two of his numberless visitors to the house so conveniently near Geneva. We can with their aid see him and hear him at the time when he was in the full tide of his improvements at Ferney and Tourney. First, Marmontel, then an author of distinction. In 1760 Marmontel spent some days at Les Délices, and has left a narrative of his visit which is highly entertaining.

MARMONTEL AT LES DÉLICES.

"Nothing could be more singular or more original than the reception Voltaire gave us. He was in bed when we arrived. He extended his arms to us, and wept for joy while he embraced me. He embraced the son of his old friend, M. Gaulard, with the same emotion. 'You find me dying,' said he; 'do you come to restore me to life, or to receive my last sighs?' My companion was alarmed at this preface; but I, who had a hundred times heard Voltaire say he was dying, gave Gaulard a gentle sign of encouragement. And indeed, a moment afterward, the dying man, making us sit down by his bedside, said, 'My dear friends, how happy I am to see you! — particularly at the moment when I have a man with me whom you will be charmed to hear. It is M. de l'Ecluse, the surgeon dentist of the late King of Poland, now the lord of an estate near Montargis, and who has been pleased to come to repair the irreparable teeth of Madame Denis. He is a charming man; but don't you know him?' 'The only L'Ecluse that I know,' answered I, 'is an actor of the old comic-opera house.' ''T is he, my friend, — 't is he himself. If you know him, you have heard the song of the "Grinder," which he plays and sings so well.' And there was Voltaire instantly imitating L'Ecluse, and with his bare arms and sepulchral voice playing the 'Grinder' and singing the song: —

'Oh, where can I put her?
My sweet little girl!
Oh, where can I put her?'

We were bursting with laughter, and he was quite serious. 'I imitate him very ill,' said he; 'it is L'Ecluse that you must hear, and his song of the "Spinner," and that of the "Postilion," and the quarrel of the Applewoman with Vadé! It is truth itself. Oh, you will be delighted. Go and speak to Madame Denis. I, ill as I am, will get up to dine with you. We 'll eat some wild fowl and listen to M. de l'Ecluse. The pleasure of seeing you has suspended my ills, and I feel myself quite revived.'

"Madame Denis received us with that cordiality which made her so charming. She introduced M. de l'Ecluse to us; and at dinner Voltaire engaged him by the most flattering praises to afford us the pleasure of hearing him. He displayed all his talents, and we appeared delighted with them. This was very requisite, for Voltaire would not have pardoned us a feeble applause.

"The walk in his gardens was employed in speaking of Paris, the 'Mercure,' the Bastille (of which I said only a word), the theatre, and the Encyclopædia. When we returned from our walk he played a game or two of chess with M. Gaulard, who, respectfully, let him win. Afterward he again spoke of the theatre and of the revolution Madame Clairon had introduced. 'Is, then, the change that has taken place in her somewhat prodigious?' said he. 'It is,' I replied 'a new talent; it is the perfection of art; or, rather, it is nature herself, such as your imagination can paint her in her greatest beauty.'

"My mind and language being warm, I endeavored to make him comprehend the natural and sublime manner in which she performed Camille, Roxane, Hermione, Ariane, and Electre. I exhausted the little eloquence I had to inspire in him that enthusiasm for Clairon with which I was filled, and enjoyed, while I spoke, the emotion to which I gave birth. At last, addressing himself to me, 'Well, my dear friend,' said he, with transport, 'it is just like Madame Denis; she has made an astonishing, an incredible progress. I wish you could see her play Zaïre, Alzire, Idamé! Talent can go no further.' Madame Denis playing Zaïre! Madame Denis compared to Clairon! I was thunder-struck; so true it is that taste accommodates itself to the objects it can enjoy, and that this wise maxim,

'When we have not what we love,
We must love what we have,'

is indeed not only a lesson of Nature, but a means she husbands to procure us pleasures.

"We resumed our walk, and while M. de Voltaire was talking to M. Gaulard of his ancient friendship for the father of this young man, I, on my side, was conversing with Madame Denis, and recalling the

good old times to her memory. In the evening I put Voltaire on the chapter of the King of Prussia. He spoke of him with a kind of cold magnanimity, like a man who disdained a too easy revenge, or as an undeceived lover pardons, in the mistress he has left, the rage and indignation she excited.

"At supper the conversation turned on the men of letters he most esteemed; and in the number it was easy for me to distinguish those he loved from the bottom of his heart. They were not those who most boasted of being in favor with him. Before he went to bed he read to us two new cantos of 'La Pucelle,' and Madame Denis informed us that, since he had been at Les Délices, it was the only day he had passed without retiring to his cabinet.

"The next day we had the discretion to leave him at least a part of his morning, and sent him word that we should wait till he rang. He was visible about eleven. He was still in bed. 'Young man,' said he, 'I hope you have not renounced poetry: let us see some of your new productions. I conceal nothing; each should have his turn.' More intimidated before him than I had ever been, whether it was that I had lost the ingenuous confidence of early youth, or that I felt more intimately than ever how difficult it is to write good verse, I resolved with difficulty to recite to him my epistle to the poets. He was highly pleased. He asked me if the poem was known at Paris. I answered that it was not. 'Then,' said he, 'you must send it to the Academy; it will make some noise there.' I represented to him that I had allowed myself a license of opinion in it at which many would be alarmed. 'I know an honorable lady,' returned he, 'who confessed that one day, after having proudly reproved a too bold lover, the tender words escaped her, "Charming, impudent wretch!" The Academy will do the same.'

"Before dinner he took me to pay some visits at Geneva; and, talking of the way in which he lived with the inhabitants, 'It is very pleasing,' said he, 'to live in a country where its sovereigns send to ask you for your carriage, that they may come and dine with you.' His house was open to them; they passed whole days there; and, as the gates of the city were shut at the close of day, not to open till sunrise, those who supped at his house were obliged to sleep there, or at the country houses that cover the borders of the lake.

"On our way, I asked him how, almost without territory, and without any facilities for commerce with foreign countries, Geneva had enriched herself. 'By manufacturing watches,' he replied, 'by reading your gazettes, and profiting by your follies. These people know how to calculate the profits on your loans.'

"As we were talking of Geneva, he asked me what I thought of

Rousseau. I answered that in his writings he appeared to me only an eloquent sophist; and in his character only a false cynic, who would burst with pride and indignation if the world ceased to gaze upon him. As to the earnest desire he had conceived of giving a fair exterior to the part he acted, I knew the anecdote related by Diderot of the origin of his first Discourse, and repeated it to him.

"'You do not astonish me,' said Voltaire. 'That man is factitious from head to foot; he is so in his mind and soul. But it is in vain for him to play now the stoic, and now the cynic; he will eternally belie himself, and his mask will stifle him.'

"Among the inhabitants of Geneva whom I saw at his house, the only men who pleased, and who were pleased with, me were the Chevalier Hubert and Cramer the bookseller. They were both of easy converse, of a jovial temper, and had wit without affectation, — a rare thing in their city. Cramer, I am told, played tragedy tolerably well; he was the Orosmane of Madame Denis, and this talent had won him the friendship and the custom of Voltaire; that is to say, thousands of francs. Hubert had a talent less useful, but amusing, and very curious in its fertility. You would have said he had eyes at his fingers' ends. With his hands behind his back, he would cut out a portrait in profile as like, and even more like, than he could draw with a pencil. He had Voltaire's face so strongly impressed on his imagination that, absent or present, his scissors could represent him meditating, writing, in action, and in all attitudes. I have seen landscapes cut out by him in white paper, where the perspective was preserved with prodigious art. These two amiable neighbors were very assiduous in their visits to Les Délices during the little time I stayed there.

"M. de Voltaire insisted on showing us his country house at Tourney, where his theatre was, a quarter of a league from Geneva. This was the end of our ride in the afternoon, in his carriage. Tourney was a little neglected country-seat, but the view from it was admirable. In the valley was the Lake of Geneva, bordered by country houses, and terminated by two large cities; beyond and in the distance, a chain of mountains of thirty leagues extent, and that Mont Blanc loaded with eternal snows and ice that never melt. Such is the view that Tourney affords. There I saw the little theatre that tormented Rousseau, and where Voltaire consoled himself for no longer visiting the theatre of Paris, which nightly resounded his fame.

"The idea of this unjust and tyrannical privation filled me with grief and indignation. Perhaps he perceived it; for, more than once, by his reflections he answered my thoughts; and on the road, as we turned, he talked to me of Versailles, of the long residence that I had made there, and of the kindness that Madame de Pompadour had formerly expressed for him.

"'She still loves you,' said I; 'she has repeated it often to me. But she is weak, and cannot, or dares not, effect all she wishes; for the unhappy woman is no longer loved, and perhaps she now envies the lot of Madame Denis, and would willingly be at Les Délices.' 'Let her come,' said he, with transport, 'and play tragedy with us. I will write characters for her and characters of queens. She is beautiful; she should know the play of the passions.' 'She knows, too,' said I, 'the torments of profound grief and bitter tears.' 'So much the better! That is just what we want!' exclaimed he, as it were enchanted at having a new actress. And, in truth, you would have said that he thought he saw her arrive. 'Since she suits you,' said I, 'leave the rest to me; if she can no longer succeed in the theatre of Versailles, I will tell her that yours awaits her.'

"This romantic fiction amused the company. They found some probability in it; and Madame Denis, indulging the delusion, entreated her uncle not to oblige her to yield her parts to the new actress. He retired to his closet for a few hours; and in the evening, at supper, kings and their mistresses being the subject of conversation, Voltaire, in comparing the spirit and gallantry of the old and new courts, displayed to us that rich memory which nothing interesting ever escaped. From Madame de la Vallière to Madame de Pompadour, the anecdotic history of the two reigns, and in the interval that of the regency, passed in review, with a rapidity and brilliancy of beauty and coloring that dazzled us. Yet he reproached himself with having stolen from M. de l'Ecluse moments which, he said, he would have occupied more agreeably to us. He begged him to indemnify us with a few scenes from the 'Applewoman,' and he laughed at them like a child.

"The next day (it was the last we were to pass together) he sent for me early in the morning, and, giving me a manuscript, 'Go into my cabinet,' said he, 'and read that; you shall give me your opinion of it.' It was the tragedy of 'Tancrède,' that he had just finished. I read it; and returning with my face bathed in tears, I told him he had written nothing more interesting. 'To whom,' asked he, 'would you give the part of Aménaide?' 'To Clairon,' answered I, — 'to the sublime Clairon; and I will answer for a success at least equal to that of "Zaïre."' 'Your tears,' replied he, 'tell me most eloquently what I was most desirous of knowing; but the action, — did you find nothing that stopped you in its march?' 'I found that it wants only what you call criticism of the closet. The public will be too much moved to be occupied with that at the theatre.' Fortunately, he said nothing of the style. I should have been obliged to conceal my sentiments; for, in my opinion, 'Tancrède,' in point of style, was very far from

being written like his best tragedies. In 'Rome Sauvée' and in 'L'Orphelin de la Chine' I had still found the beautiful versification of 'Zaïre,' of 'Mérope,' and of 'La Mort de César,' but in 'Tancrède' I thought I saw a decline in his style: weak, tedious verses, loaded with redundant words that disguise the want of force and vigor, — in a word, the age of the poet; for in him, as in Corneille, the poetry of style was the first that failed, and after 'Tancrède,' where the fire of genius still emitted some sparks, it was wholly extinguished.

"Afflicted at our departure, he would not steal from us one moment of this last day. The desire of seeing me received at the French Academy, the eulogy of my tales, which formed, he said, their most agreeable family reading, then my analysis of Rousseau's letter to D'Alembert on the stage, — a refutation which he thought unanswerable, and which he appeared to esteem very highly, — were, during our walk, the subjects of his conversation. I asked him whether Geneva had been deceived on the true motive of this letter of Rousseau. 'Rousseau,' said he, 'is better known at Geneva than at Paris. We are here the dupes neither of his false zeal nor of his false eloquence. It is against me that his darts are directed, and that is obvious to every one. Possessed of an unbounded pride, he would wish that in his native country no one should occupy any place in the public mind but himself. My residence here eclipses him; he envies me the air I breathe at this place; and, above all, he cannot suffer that, by amusing Geneva sometimes, I should steal moments that should be employed in thinking of him.'

"As we were to set off at the dawn of day, as soon as the gates of the city should be open and we could get horses, we resolved, in company with Madame Denis, M. Hubert, and M. Cramer, to prolong till that hour the pleasure of sitting up and conversing together. Voltaire *would* be of the party, and we pressed him in vain to retire to bed. More awake than ourselves, he read to us some cantos of 'Jeanne.' This reading had for me an inexpressible charm; for if Voltaire, in reciting heroic verse, affected, in my mind, an emphasis too monotonous, a cadence too strongly marked, no one read familiar and comic verse with so much natural delicacy and grace; his eyes and smile had an expression that I have never seen but in him. Alas! it was for me the song of the swan, and I was to see him again only as he expired.

"Our mutual adieus were tender even to tears, but much more so on my part than on his. That was natural, for, independently of my gratitude and all the motives I had for loving him, I left him in exile."[1]

[1] 2 Memoirs of Marmontel (London, 1806), 291.

This is an interior view of Voltaire, as Marmontel retained it in his memory thirty years after. His lot was not so entirely Arcadian as it seemed to a guest. Probably on their ride to Tourney Voltaire told his young friend of his preliminary quarrel with the curé of the little parish, "the most execrable *chicaneur* of the province:" how the said curé had plotted to send the five families, who alone remained in Ferney, "straight to heaven by starving them to death;" depriving them of a poor-tithe which they had enjoyed for a century, and putting them to fifteen hundred francs of law expenses before they knew it. The lord of Ferney defended his peasants on this occasion with a fire and persistence all his own, but could only prevail, at last, by paying a considerable part of the claim against them.

Unfortunately, too, he became embroiled with the President de Brosses, the proprietor of Tourney, a scholar and apparently a gentleman. There is a volume of four hundred pages upon this affair; but it serves only to convert into a baffling enigma what could have been explained, perhaps, in twenty lines. The original cause of the imbroglio was two hundred and eighty-one francs' worth of fire-wood, which had been cut upon Tourney *either* before *or* after Voltaire's purchase. Voltaire claimed that the wood was his own, and refused to pay for it. De Brosses insisted the wood was his, and demanded payment of the man who had cut it. This was the seeming ground of the dispute; but it was involved in some way, and embittered by some course of action, not explained, pursued by the president in the affair with the curé. Letters upon letters passed between the poet and the president; but several of Voltaire's most material replies are wanting, and it is therefore an impossibility to ascertain which of the two was in the right. At length, De Brosses, tired out with the interminable dispute, made this proposition to a friend: —

"Listen: an idea comes into my head at this moment. It is the only solution creditably admissible for me, and all will be finished. Let Voltaire, in your presence, send the 281 livres to the curé of Tourney, or to Madame Gallatin,[1] to be distributed to the poor inhabitants of the parish. Then all will be said. On my part, I will give a re-

[1] A neighbor, grandmother of Albert Gallatin, secretary of the treasury of the United States from 1801.

ceipt for the 281 livres to Charles Baudy [wood-cutter], and thus the suit will be terminated to the profit of the poor."

This proposition appears to have been accepted, and there was a lull in the storm. Voltaire, however, conceived an extreme dislike of his proprietor, who, on his part, had no opinion of his tenant's ability as a manager of public business, and resented his interference in the affairs of the "land of Gex."

Before leaving Les Délices, he had a visitor of different quality from the amiable and sympathetic Marmontel: Casanova the Italian adventurer, the man of many talents and more vicissitudes; by turns prisoner and courtier, financier, poet, and man of intrigue, but always the positive, persistent, self-satisfied, irresistible Casanova. In 1760 he was in high vogue at Paris, and much employed by embarrassed ministers in negotiating loans and managing new kinds of lotteries of his own invention, which D'Alembert himself thought mathematically sound. He has left us an account of his visit to Les Délices, which has at least the merit of being interesting in a high degree. He called forth from Voltaire a repartee which may be styled, perhaps, the best of its kind yet recorded. On his way to Geneva, he paused in the adjacent canton of Bern to pay his homage to the eminent naturalist, Haller, then retired from Göttingen, and settled as chief magistrate of his native canton. During dinner, he asked Haller (who, he says, "did not wish his orthodoxy to be doubted") whether Voltaire often came to see him. Haller smiled, and replied by a happy quotation from Horace: "*Vetabo, qui Cereris sacrum vulgavit arcanum, sub iisdem sit trabibus.*"[1] On taking leave, three days after, Casanova ventured to say how much he rejoiced at the prospect of becoming acquainted with the great Voltaire; upon which the orthodox philosopher said, "Voltaire is a man whose acquaintance I have had reason to seek; but many persons, contrary to the physical laws, have found him greater when seen at a distance."

Casanova pursued his journey, and soon found himself at Voltaire's abode. He arrived on the day in 1760 when Mr. Fox, brother of the orator, reached the château.

[1] I will forbid him to be under this roof who discloses the secret rite of Ceres.

CASANOVA AT LES DÉLICES.

"I found Voltaire just rising from dinner, surrounded by ladies and gentlemen.

"'At last [said I, on approaching him] the happiest moment of my life is arrived: I at length behold my great teacher. For the last twenty years, sir, I have attended your school.'

"V. 'Do me this honor twenty years longer, and then do not fail to bring me the money for your schooling.'

"C. 'I promise; it shall not be withheld. But do you also promise that you will then expect me?'

"V. 'I promise it, and would sooner die than break my promise.'

"A general laugh gave loud applause to this first witty answer of Voltaire: this was a matter of course. The conversation turned soon upon poetry.

"V. 'Which Italian poet do you prefer?'

"C. 'Ariosto. I cannot, however, with propriety say that I *prefer* him. In my opinion he is the only poet, and yet I know them all. When I saw your censure on Ariosto, about fifteen years ago, I was persuaded you would retract your judgment when you had read his works.'

"V. 'I thank you for believing I had not read Ariosto. I had read him, but I was young, and imperfectly acquainted with your language. At the same time I was influenced by those of the Italian literati who were admirers of Tasso. Thus I unfortunately suffered an opinion on Ariosto to go abroad which I considered as my own. It was not my own opinion. I admire your Ariosto.'

"C. 'I now breathe again. Do, I beseech you, excommunicate the book in which you have ridiculed Ariosto.'

"V. 'All my books are excommunicated already. But you shall witness in what manner I have retracted my judgment of Ariosto.'

"Voltaire now astonished me. He recited by heart the two long passages of the thirty-fourth and thirty-fifth cantos of 'Orlando,' where the divine poet makes Astolfo converse with the Apostle John, without missing one verse, or in a single instance violating the rules of prosody. He afterwards extolled the beauties of the poet by such observations as became a truly great man: more sublime remarks could not have been expected even from an Italian commentator. I listened to him with the utmost attention, and watched, but in vain, to discover an error. Turning to the company, I declared that my admiration was boundless, and that it should be made known throughout Italy. Voltaire now said, 'The whole of Europe shall be informed by myself of the ample reparation which is due to the greatest genius she

ever produced.' He hardly knew how or when to put an end to his encomiums; and the next day he presented me with his own translation of a stanza.

"Though none of the company, except myself, understood the Italian language, yet Voltaire's recitation on the preceding day procured him the applause of all present. After these applauses had subsided, Madame Denis, his niece, asked me whether I considered the long passage recited by her uncle as one of the finest of that great poet. I replied, 'Certainly, madam, it is one of the finest, but not the finest.' She inquired farther, 'Has it been decided, then, which is the finest?' I replied, 'This was absolutely necessary; for, otherwise, the apotheosis of the poet could not have taken place.' 'He has been canonized, then?' continued she. 'I did not know that.' A general burst of laughter ensued, and all of them, Voltaire being foremost, declared themselves in favor of Madame Denis. I preserved the utmost gravity. Voltaire, seemingly offended, said, 'I know why you do not laugh. You mean to indicate that the part for which Ariosto has been called the divine must have been inspired.'

"C. 'Most certainly.'

"V. 'And which is the passage?'

"C. 'The last thirty-six stanzas of the twenty-third canto. They describe the madness of Orlando with so much truth that they may be called technically correct. No one, except Ariosto, ever knew how madness comes upon us. He alone has been able to describe it. You, too, have doubtless shuddered while reading those stanzas. They stir up all the sensibilities of the soul.'

"V. 'I remember them. All the frightfulness of love is there displayed; and I am impatient to read them again.'

"'Perhaps,' said Madame Denis, 'you will be so kind as to recite the passage,' at the same time turning herself to her uncle, as if to ask his consent.

"C. 'Why should I not, if you will have the goodness to listen to me?'

"Madame D. 'What! Have you taken the trouble to commit it to memory?'

"C. 'From the age of fifteen I have read Ariosto twice or three times annually; he must therefore have necessarily impressed my memory without any effort on my part,— I might say, almost involuntarily. His genealogies and historical episodes, however, are an exception: they fatigue the mind, and leave the heart unaffected. Horace is the only author whom I have wholly committed to memory; yet he, too, has some verses, in his epistles, that are too prosaic.'

"V. 'I conceive it possible to learn Horace by heart; but to succeed with Ariosto is no trifle. There are forty-six long cantos.'

"C. 'Say, rather, fifty-one.'

"Voltaire was silent, but Madame Denis immediately resumed, and said, —

"'Quick, quick! Let us have the thirty-six stanzas of which you say that they excite horror, and which have obtained for the poet the appellation of divine.'

"I immediately recited them, avoiding the usual declamation of the Italians. Ariosto needs not the artificial aid of a declaimer, which, after all, produces monotony. I perfectly agree with the French that a singing delivery is intolerable. I repeated the stanzas just as if they had been prose, except as to tone, look, and change of voice. They perceived and felt the effort I made to repress my tears, without being able to suppress theirs. When I had finished the recital, the countenances of the company sufficiently expressed their approbation. Voltaire exclaimed, 'I have always said, if you wish to make others weep, you must weep yourself. But to weep, one must feel; and to feel, one must have a soul.' He then embraced me, and thanked me; he moreover promised to recite the same stanzas on the following day. He kept his word. We resumed our conversation about Ariosto, and Madame Denis expressed her surprise that the Roman pontiff had not included his works in the list of prohibited books. Voltaire told her the contrary had been done. Leo X. had excommunicated, by a particular bull, all those who should dare to condemn Ariosto. The two great houses of Este and Medici would not allow the poet to be injured.

"We now conversed on other subjects, all relating to literature; and at last his piece entitled 'L'Ecossaise,' which had then been acted at Solothurn, became the topic of conversation. Voltaire remarked that if it would afford me any pleasure to personate a character at his house he would request Monsieur de Chavigny to prevail on his lady to play the part of Lindane, and he himself would act the part of Monrose. I politely thanked him for his kindness, but declined the proposition, adding that Madame de Chavigny was at Basil, and that I was obliged to continue my journey on the following day. Upon this, he raised a loud cry, and put the whole company in an uproar, alleging that my visit would be an insult to him, unless I remained with him at least a week. I told him I had come to Geneva expressly to see him, and having accomplished this I had nothing else to detain me here.

"V. 'Have you come to speak with me, or do you wish that I should speak with you?'

"C. 'I came here, above all things, for the sake of your conversation.'

"V. 'You must then stay at least three days longer. Dine with me every day, and we will converse together.'

"I accepted the offer, but returned to my inn, having much writing to do.

"According to my promise, I went to dine with Voltaire on the following day, and met the Duke de Villars. He had just arrived at Geneva to consult the celebrated physician Tronchin, who had some years before saved his life. I said very little during dinner, but afterwards Voltaire entered into a conversation with me about the constitution of Venice; he knew that I was dissatisfied with the government; I nevertheless disappointed his expectations. I endeavored to convince him that no country in the world enjoyed greater liberty than Venice. Perceiving the subject was not agreeable to me, he took me aside, and went with me into his garden, of which he styled himself the creator. When we came to the extremity of a long avenue, close to a running water, 'This,' said he, 'is the Rhone, which I send to France.' He at the same time directed my attention to the beautiful prospect he had of Geneva and Mont Blanc. He afterwards began a conversation upon Italian literature, and evinced great ingenuity and much learning; but his conclusions were generally erroneous; I, however, allowed him to enjoy his opinion. He disagreed with me on Homer, Dante, and Petrarch. His judgment of the works of these great men is well known. He could not refrain from writing exactly as objects represented themselves to his own mind, and this has greatly injured him in the public opinion. I contented myself with merely replying that if these great men had not really deserved the admiration of all who had studied them they would not have acquired the high reputation which they still maintained.

"I accompanied Voltaire into his sleeping-room, where he changed his wig and the little cap he used to wear under it as a preservative against rheumatism. On his writing-table lay several Italian poets, and among other the 'La Secchia Repita' of Tassoni. 'This,' said he, 'is the only tragi-comic poem Italy possesses. Tassoni was a monk, and united with learning a taste for the *belles-lettres*. As a poet he is not without genius.' Voltaire now took me into a room and showed me a number of parcels, amounting perhaps to a hundred. 'This,' said he, 'is my correspondence. You see here nearly fifty thousand letters, which I have answered.'

"C. 'Do you keep copies of your answers?'

"V. 'Of a great many of them. I keep an amanuensis for that purpose.'

"C. 'I know booksellers who would give you a high price for these treasures.'

"V. 'Be on your guard with the booksellers, should you ever publish a work; but perhaps you have already published something?'

"C. 'I will begin when I am older.'

"We were now called to join the company, and two hours passed away in social conversation. The great poet shone, and entertained the whole circle. He was constantly applauded, although his satires were sometimes very severe. He always laughed at them himself, and most of the company joined him. It was impossible to keep a better house than Voltaire did. In fact, he was the only person who gave a good dinner. He was then sixty-six years of age, and had an annual income of 125,000 livres. Those who assert that he became rich by taking an unfair advantage over the booksellers are mistaken. The booksellers, on the contrary, acted unfairly towards him, except only the Cramers, whose fortune he made. He gave them his works as a present, and thus promoted their circulation.

"We should have parted good friends, but I unfortunately quoted a passage of Horace, to say something flattering to Voltaire.

"V. 'Horace was a great teacher of dramatic poetry. The rules which he has given us will never become obsolete.'

"C. 'One of his rules you neglect, and only one, but you do it as becomes a great man.'

"V. 'Which is it?'

"C. 'You do not write *contentus paucis lectoribus*.'[1]

"V. 'If Horace had had to contend with superstition, he would, like myself, have written for the whole world.'

"C. 'I believe you might spare yourself the trouble of this contest; for you will never succeed in extirpating superstition. And if you were to succeed, pray, what would you substitute for it?'

"V. 'I admire that: when I deliver the world from a monster which devours it, I am asked what I will put in its place!'

"C. 'But superstition does not devour it. On the contrary, the world wants it.'

"V. 'I love mankind! I wish to see them as happy as myself, and free. But freedom and superstition can never agree. Where do you find that slavery renders a nation happy?'

"C. 'Would you then see the people possessed of sovereignty?'

"V. 'God forbid! Only *one* must rule.'

"C. 'Then superstition is necessary; for without it the people will not obey the monarch.'

"V. 'Let me hear nothing of monarchy. This word reminds me of despotism, which I hate as much as slavery.'

"C. 'But what do you then desire? If only one is to rule, I cannot view him in any other character than that of a monarch.'

[1] Content with few readers.

"V. 'I would have him to rule over a free people, and then he will be their head, without our calling him monarch; for he could not then act arbitrarily.'

"C. 'But Addison says that such a monarch, such a chief, cannot in reality be found. I adhere to the opinion of Hobbes. Of two evils we must choose the least. A people without superstition will become philosophers, and philosophers will not obey. To be happy, a people must be kept in subjection, in restraint, in chains.'

"V. 'If you had read my writings, you would have seen that I have proved superstition to be the greatest enemy to kings.'

"C. 'I have read and studied your writings repeatedly, and never more assiduously than when I differed from you in opinion. Your predominant passion is love for the human race. *Est ubi peccus.*[1] It makes you blind. Love mankind, but love them as they are. They are not susceptible of the benefit you intend for them. If they followed your advice, they would only become unhappy and wicked. Leave them, therefore, the monster that devours them. It is dear to them. I never laughed more than when I read that Don Quixote found himself in the greatest perplexity how he should defend himself against the galley-slaves, whom, out of generosity, he had liberated.'

"Voltaire, wishing to change the subject of our conversation, asked me whence I came.

"C. 'From Roches. I should never have forgiven myself, had I left Switzerland without having seen the celebrated Haller. It has ever been a feast to me to pay my homage to the great geniuses of the age, and you have now furnished the seasoning.'

"V. 'You must have been pleased with Monsieur de Haller.'

"C. 'I spent three delightful days with him.'

"V. 'I congratulate you. He is a man to whom we must bow.'

"C. 'I think so, too. You render him justice. I lament that he did not exercise equal justice towards you.'

"V. 'Ha! ha! ha! He thinks ill of me, and I think well of him. Very possibly we are both mistaken.'

"We all applauded this answer. Its chief value consisted in its promptness. We now concluded our conversation on literary subjects; and I remained silent as long as Voltaire continued with the company. I then paid my respects to Madame Denis, offering to execute any commissions she might have for Rome, and prepared for my departure, not without self-satisfaction at my last combat with this athletic champion; but also with some portion of chagrin, which, for ten years, made me a severe judge of all that I read, both old and new, from the pen of this great man."

[1] Whence is your fault.

These are pleasing interviews, and present the circle of Les Délices in an attractive light. Voltaire conversed much with his erratic guest upon living and recent Italian authors, not agreeing with him on several of them. Casanova also touched upon "La Pucelle," without knowing what it was nor who had written it. He launched into warm commendation of Crébillon, one of whose tragedies he had translated into Italian verse, and favored Voltaire with the recital of a passage. He also derived the impression that Madame Denis excessively admired Frederic II., and it is probable, therefore, that the repulsion between host and guest was not all on one side. But, farewell, Les Délices! In 1765 Voltaire sold it, giving as a reason that he could no longer support the fatigue of receiving such crowds of visitors as the nearness of that villa to Geneva brought upon him. "I have thought, too," he wrote to Collini, "that, as I have only one body, I ought not to have two houses." But Ferney had already been his for some years. He was proud of his new abode, and, above all, he exulted in the lordly freedom of his tenure. "It is much," he wrote to his niece, Madame de Fontaine, "to be independent; but to have found the secret of being independent in France is more than to have written 'La Henriade.'"

CHAPTER XXIV.

ÉCRASEZ L'INFÂME.

He had now reached the goal of commonplace aspiration. He possessed in richest abundance what common men covet and rest in. He was grand seigneur, with "two leagues of land" about him, a park three miles in circuit, gardens, châteaux, vassals, a revenue of a hundred thousand francs, a parish church in which he was entitled to be prayed for, some good pictures, a heterogeneous library of five thousand volumes, and a fame the most intense and the widest spread that literature had ever given a man during his life-time. "What will he do with it?" Will he subside now into a benevolent and tranquil country gentleman, a little vain of his peaches? So far from it that he only entered upon the phase of his career which gives him universal importance about the time of his building Ferney. At sixty-five, he was yet to do the chief part of the work which will make him interesting to remote posterity.

The French words printed at the head of this chapter, *Écrasez l'Infâme*, may be translated, Crush the monster. At the period of his settlement at Ferney, he fell into the habit of ending his more familiar letters with those words, in imitation of the Roman Cato, who finished every speech by saying, "Such is my opinion; I also think that Carthage must be destroyed." At first he used the word *fantôme*, as when, in 1757, writing to D'Alembert, he concluded thus: "Courage; continue, you and your colleagues [in the Encyclopædia], to overthrow the hideous phantom, enemy of philosophy and persecutor of philosophers." A few days after, in writing to the same staunch friend and ally, he employed the word *colosse*. "To overthrow the colossus, only five or six philosophers who understand one another are necessary." Then he explained a little what he meant. "The object is not to hinder our lack-

eys from going to mass or sermon; it is to rescue fathers of families from the tyranny of impostors, and to inspire the spirit of tolerance." Some days after, he again particularizes: "Fanatic papists, fanatic Calvinists, all are tarred with the same brush;" for whose frustration D'Alembert was again exhorted to labor.

As the fight grew hotter and the combatants more numerous, he settled upon *Écrasez l'Infâme* as the battle-cry of the faithful. He rang all the changes upon these words. Sometimes he used them in jest; often with passionate vehemence. Not unfrequently, in the haste of finishing his letter, he would abbreviate the words to *Écr. l'Inf.*, and sometimes he would repeat this abbreviation many times in the same letter. Occasionally he would write, in the only corner left, *É. l'I.* To show his way of using a phrase which has now become familiar and famous, I will give a few examples, taken from the endings of letters to such devoted friends of the cause as D'Alembert and Damilaville: —

"I want you to crush *l'infâme;* that is the main point. It is necessary to reduce it to the state in which it is in England; and you can succeed in this if you will. It is the greatest service that can be rendered to the human race."

"Attack, brothers, skillfully, all of you, *l'inf.* What interests me is the propagation of the faith, of truth, the progress of philosophy, and the abasement of *l'inf.*"

"The Jansenist and the Molinists are tearing one another, and uncovering their shameful wounds; it is necessary to crush one by the other, and make their ruin the steps to the throne of truth. I embrace tenderly the brethren in Lucretius, in Cicero, in Socrates, in Marcus Antoninus, in Julian, and in the communion of all our holy patriarchs."

"Engage all my brethren to pursue *l'inf.* with voice and pen, without giving it a moment's pause. Your impassioned brother, V."

"I am always interested in the success of the French drama, but much more in the brethren, and in the destruction of *l'inf.*, which must never be lost sight of. *Valete fratres.*"

"I end all my letters by saying: *Écr. l'inf.*, just as Cato always said, 'Such is my opinion, and Carthage must be destroyed.'"

"I embrace my brethren in Confucius, etc. Ah! *l'inf.!*"

"O my brethren, combat *l'inf.*, even to your last breath. Does the comic opera still sustain the glory of France! *Écr. l'inf.*"

"I embrace all the brethren. My health is pitiable. *Écr. l'inf.*"

"I embrace you tenderly, my dear brother. *Écr. l'inf.*, I tell you."

"I salute all the brethren. Nevertheless, *Écr. l'inf.*"

"How can you say that *l'inf.* had no part in the crime of that scoundrel [Damiens]? Read, then, his reply: 'It was religion that made me do what I have done.' This is what he said in his examination. I am only his clerk. My dear brother, I hate all tyranny."

"The older I grow, the more implacable enemy I become of *l'infâme*. Adieu. Shall I not see you before I die? *Écr. l'inf.*"

"My tender benediction to all the brethren. *Orate, fratres, et vigilate. Écr. l'inf.*"

"Drink to my health with brother Plato [Diderot], and *Écr. l'inf.*"

"*Vive felix!* and *écr. l'inf.* We will crush it; we will crush it."

"*Écr. l'inf.*, my dear brother, *écr. l'inf.*; and say to brother Protagoras [D'Alembert] *écr. l'inf.* in the morning, and *écr. l'inf.* in the evening."

"Oh, if the faithful had the warmth of your noble soul, how much good they would do! Oh, the lovely musical chimes that should end with *Écrasez l'infâme!*" [To Damilaville in 1765.]

A very long list of similar utterances could be given, but these will suffice. What, then, was that Infamous Thing, which he was so passionately desirous of crushing? And why this access of zeal, in the decline of his life, when he was panoplied about from dangerous attack by a splendor of reputation and princely opulence never before enjoyed, still less won, by a poet? This question is one which demands an explicit answer. The *Infâme* of Voltaire was not religion, nor the Christian religion, nor the Roman Catholic church. It was *religion claiming supernatural authority, and enforcing that claim by pains and penalties.* That is the fairest answer to the question, taking his whole life into view. The access of zeal which he experienced at the time now under consideration was due to particular causes. Thirty years before, as the reader may remember, when Hérault said to him, "You will not destroy the Christian religion," he replied, "We shall see." It is Voltaire himself who preserves this anecdote.[1] But who was Hérault, and what had he to do with it? Hérault was lieutenant-general of the French *police*, through whom French priests put people into dungeons, broke them on the wheel, and burnt them at the stake.

The *Infâme* which Voltaire had in his mind when he wrote

[1] Voltaire to D'Alembert, June 20, 1760.

Écr. l'inf., *mon cher frère*, *écr. l'inf.*, *et dites à frère Protagoras*, *écr. l'inf. le matin*, *et écr. l'inf. le soir*, was religion claiming supernatural authority, and employing to enforce the claim the power and resources of a government. It was the most ancient and powerful of all alliances, that of the Medicine-Man and the Chief, with modern means and appliances to assist both. It was religion with the Bastille and the rack at its command. It was religion owning two acres of every five in France (usually, the best two), and able to expel from the other three the noblest Frenchmen who called in question its tenets. It was religion smoothing the upward path to servile mediocrity, and making it impracticable to honest merit. It was religion which could put an ugly tall pot upon the head of a clown, a crooked stick in his hand, cover him all over with tawdry raiment, endow him with an imposing title and a prince's revenue, and then sit him down, squat like a toad, upon the intellect of France. It was religion making an Ass of Mirepoix the censor of a Newton in Newton's own subjects. It was religion keeping an ear always open to receive from women secrets not told to parent or husband. It was religion the mania of the weak, the cloak of the false, the weapon of the cruel. It was religion killing religion, and making virtue itself contemptible by resting its claim on grounds untenable and ridiculous. It was religion wielding the whole mass of ignorance, indolence, and cowardice, and placing it solid and entire in the only path by which the human race could advance. It was the worst thing that ever was in the world. It was L'INFAME!

Voltaire was mistaken in supposing that *l'Infâme* had no existence in Protestant England. If we look into the early lives of British men noted for their hostility to it, such as Hume, Gibbon, Shelley, Dickens, and Hood, we usually find that they suffered from it acutely in childhood or youth, as Voltaire doubtless did from the craven austerity of his elder brother, Armand, as well as from his early acquaintance with M. Hérault. The case of Thomas Hood is one in point. The most careless reader of his works must have observed that he loathed the British form of *l'Infâme* with something like Voltaire's sustained intensity, and never lost a chance to give it a lunge with his rapier. At the end of one of his later let-

ters we have the secret. An awful widow having long pestered him with her insolent tracts and impious admonitions, he at length turned upon her, and wrote her a letter, — his Tract, as he styled it, — in which, perhaps, he used language somewhat too violent. He seems to have thought so himself, and concluded his performance with an apology : —

" And now, madam, farewell. Your mode of recalling yourself to my memory reminds me that your fanatical mother insulted mine in the last days of her life (which was marked by every Christian virtue) by the presentation of a Tract addressed to Infidels. I remember also that the same heartless woman intruded herself, with less reverence than a Mohawk squaw would have exhibited, on the chamber of death, and interrupted with her jargon almost my very last interview with my dying parent. Such reminiscences warrant some severity ; but if more be wanting, know that my poor sister has been excited by a circle of Canters like yourself into a religious frenzy, and is at this moment in a private mad-house." [1]

It was *this spirit* — give it what name you will — that Voltaire abhorred with a detestation so intense. In France, in his day, that spirit had blank *lettres de cachet* in its secret portfolio, and the French police to serve them. Let me remark, also, that, like Hood, he set limits to his dissent, and adhered to his belief in a superintending deity. Some of his ablest and best allies were atheists. He had a short and easy way with them. " Gentlemen," he would say, taking out his watch, " the watch proves a watchmaker." Baron de Gleichen, who visited him in 1757, relates that a young author, at his wits' end for the means of living, knocked one day at the poet's door, and to recommend himself said, " I am an apprentice atheist [*garçon athée*], at your service." Voltaire replied, " I have the honor to be a master deist ; but, although our trades are opposed, I will give you some supper to-night and some work to-morrow. I wish to avail myself of your arms, and not of your head." [2]

He evidently felt at times the staggering difficulty of reconciling obvious facts — as, for example, the existence of so much innocent and profitless suffering in the world — with the

[1] 2 Memorials of Thomas Hood, by his Son, 109. Boston, 1860.
[2] Souvenirs, page 213.

simple theory of the universe that has come down to us from the childhood of our race. But any other theory then current seemed to him still less tenable; and he thought the idea of a Supreme Being "necessary" both to philosophy and to morals. Atheism, however, he deemed a slight and curable malady, compared with that unutterable thing which caused the massacres of St. Bartholomew, and kept France in a bloody broil for a century.

"The atheist [he once wrote] is a monster that will devour only to appease his hunger. Superstition is another monster, which will rend men for conscience' sake. I have always remarked that an atheist can be cured; but you can never cure radically the superstitious man. The atheist is a man of understanding, who is mistaken, but who thinks for himself; the superstitious man is brutally stupid, who has never had any ideas of his own. The atheist will violate Iphigenia about to espouse Achilles; but the fanatic will piously slay her upon the altar, and believe that Jupiter will be much indebted to him for the act. The atheist will steal a golden vessel from a church, in order to give a supper to his loose companions; but the fanatic will celebrate an *auto-da-fé* in that church, and sing a Jewish canticle with full throat while burning Jews at the stake. Yes, my friends, atheism and fanaticism are the two poles of a universe of confusion and horror. The narrow zone of virtue is between those two poles. March with a firm step in that path; believe in a good God, and be good." [1]

Such remained his conviction as long as he lived. Without ever being in the least "devout," he had the feeling always which he once expressed so neatly: "If there were no God, it would be necessary to invent him."

[1] Histoire de Jeuni, 1769, chapter xi. 60 Œuvres de Voltaire, 320. 97-volume edition.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE PROVOCATION.

It remains now to indicate, with all possible brevity, the events which inflamed anew the zeal of Voltaire against *l'Infâme* and caused him to reconsecrate his life to a systematic endeavor to crush it.

Let us remember that he had been much employed, during his residence in Switzerland, in a rapid review and reconstruction of his sketch of Universal History ("Essai sur les Mœurs"). Rapid reviews of history are misleading, for, as a rule, it is the exceptional, and that alone, which history records: crimes, catastrophes, wars, epidemics, the downfall of kings and dynasties, the collapse of empires, revolutions, the fierce collision of old and new; in a word, whatever is so extraordinary as to be often related and long remembered. Nor has the literary art yet devised a mode of keeping the swift reader in mind of the slow, slow lapse of time. We read a history of the Thirty Years' War in thirty hours; and the more the historian has "grouped" and condensed, the more excellent we are inclined to regard him. But effective grouping deceives by making the reader insensible of the intervals of time and the wide extent of space. Reading a rapid, striking history of the religious wars is something like spending an afternoon upon Blackwell's Island, where the mad, the sick, the destitute, and the criminal of a great city are massed so effectively that a stupendous sum of anguish and depravity can be viewed in two hours. The obliging Macaulay who accompanies the visitor does not keep dinning in his ears that for every one of those unhappy persons there are a hundred on the next island who are well, solvent, sane, and virtuous.

Studying religion in the library, Voltaire found it a bloody and a hideous thing; its history only to be fitly told in sobs and shrieks. It was the miserable history of half-developed

man. He was not in jest when he used to say that he always had an access of fever on St. Bartholomew's day. Moreover, he read of all those horrors with a modernized mind; or, in other words, with a sense of the absurd futility of religious controversy, in which he saw infuriate men contesting points respecting which certainty was impossible. Such impressions as these were most fresh and vivid upon his mind in 1758, when he read the last proofs of the sixth volume of his "Essai sur les Mœurs," in which religion rarely appears or fairly could appear except as the scourge and opprobrium of our imperfect race.

Then it was that the ecclesiastical powers, warmly encouraged by the queen and her children, and actively supported by the king, seemed about to overwhelm and crush the intellect and science of France. It was Boyer of Mirepoix, not Voltaire, who began this business of "crushing;" and Boyer must, for the time, have accomplished his purpose but for the genius, audacity, and tact of Voltaire, who began crushing on his own account.

Jean-François Boyer, among the least meritorious churchmen of his generation, a dull man, unknown as preacher or theologian, kept his country in a broil for fourteen years, his influence being wholly due to the favor of the royal family, who assigned to him the bestowal of the church's fat things. It was he who gave rich abbeys and nominated bishops; through him alone was fortune or rank to be won in the church. He used his power with unswerving purpose to crush opposition to the Bull Unigenitus, and to enforce the supremacy of the church over the human mind. Like most of the extremely mischievous men, he was strictly moral, and seems to have coveted nothing for himself but power. Probably, too, he was "ass" enough to believe in the system of fictions of which himself was part. Sincere, moral, disinterested, obstinate, and without intelligence, he was just the man to push a despotism far on toward its destruction, and this he did.

His first important act, his masterpiece of insolence and folly, was his attempt to make the acceptance of the Sacred Bull a condition of absolution to dying penitents. No absolution, no sacraments; no sacraments, no burial in consecrated ground! He chose Paris as the scene of this experi-

ment. Having appointed Beaumont Archbishop of Paris, he induced him to require his parish priests to withhold the last sacraments from Jansenists who refused to accept the Bull as an article of faith. This was going far, and it confirms the suspicion, generally entertained at the time, of his sincere and strong belief in the necessity of the rite. It is only blind and bigoted sincerity that dares such inhuman folly. In hypocrisy there is an ingredient of intellect, small indeed, but usually sufficient to prevent persistence in a policy quite ruinous.

One instance will serve to show the exquisite working of this new rule. In June, 1749 (the year in which Voltaire was set free by Madame du Châtelet's death), died at Paris Charles Coffin, poet, famous scholar, illustrious school-master, venerated Jansenist, aged seventy-two. In early life, among other genial poems, he had written an ode to champagne, which some grateful producers recompensed by an annual gift of the wine to the end of his days. Afterward, he composed Latin hymns, several of which were printed in the authorized prayer-books. Advanced by Rollin to the mastership of the College of Beauvais in Paris, he raised that institution to the highest point of celebrity, and gained by it a private fortune of four hundred thousand francs. But, in common with a majority of the educated religious Frenchmen of his generation, he could not accept the Bull Unigenitus, and thus had failed to acquire a *billet de confession*, as it was termed, — a certificate that he was sound upon the Bull, signed by the curé of the parish. In his last sickness, Father Carme, his confessor for thirty years, a good, timid old man, past eighty, was unwilling to confess him, because he could not give him absolution and administer the last rites without falling under the censure of his superiors. The curé of the parish refused also. The afflicted family appealed to the magistracy, who, in turn, referred them to the archbishop, who sustained the priests. While the archbishop was considering the matter, the principal of the College of Beauvais died without the sacraments, — he whose hymns were in the breviary and were daily chanted in the churches, whose pupils adorned high places of the liberal professions all over France, who was held in veneration by the Jansenists and honored by men of the world as poet and scholar. Where was he to be buried? His remains were

"presented" at the church of his own parish. The curé, a "good Molinist," refused to perform the service. The same evening, the body, in the presence of four thousand persons, many of whom had been his pupils, was conveyed to the chapel of the college, Saint-Jean-de-Beauvais, where it was entombed with extraordinary solemnity.[1]

Such events as these have consequences. The person chiefly instrumental in arranging and compelling this honorable burial was the nephew of M. Coffin, a distinguished lawyer of Paris. Six months after, he also died. Then, "the good Molinist" of a curé, whom he had frustrated, had his revenge in refusing him also the last consolations of the church of which he was a devoted member. This new mode of holy warfare, this heartless contest over the pillows of dying saints, struck the lightest minds. It alarmed thoughtful citizens as a breach in the social system that made the French people one family. It led directly and immediately to that long, last struggle between the king and the parliament of Paris, which constitutes the chief part of the preliminary history of the French Revolution.

The parliament of Paris — the collective magistracy and supreme court of the city — was a slight check upon the absolutism of the king; the more precious because it was the only one. An edict imposing a tax was not law until the parliament had formally registered it; and though the king, by coming in person to the parliament, could command it to register an edict, and compel obedience to the command, yet this was an extreme measure, and not resorted to unless the case was urgent. This parliament, strongly Jansenist in its convictions, dared on this occasion to arrest the Molinist curé, to impose a fine upon him, and even to detain him a few hours a prisoner. It also sent to the king a remonstrance against these proceedings of the archbishop, which spoke the feelings of the French people; but the king allowed a whole year to pass without giving an answer. This king, dull in all else, had the instinct of his order considerably developed; he vaguely felt that his position in the *régime* was a kindred fiction to that of the archbishop, and that neither could long survive the other. He lent, therefore, the authority and prestige of his office to all the besotted follies of Boyer and Beaumont.

[1] 4 Journal de Barbier, 373.

These men showed a perverse tact in selecting the kind of victims who were surest to excite the ardent sympathies of the people. For example, the archbishop, soon after, dismissed two ladies of Jansenist opinions from their offices in the great hospital of Paris. One was the matron, and the other the stewardess. It belonged to the archbishop to appoint all the officers of the hospital whose functions were of a spiritual nature, and he claimed that these ladies were subject to his authority because they sometimes heard the younger patients say their catechism. They were known to be Jansenists, and the archbishop abruptly deprived them of their places. All Paris was indignant; the contributions to the hospital fell off; the inmates suffered. Attention being thus strongly directed to the hospital, its affairs were found to be abominably administered; so large a part of its revenues were absorbed in pensions and allowances to persons not connected with it that to the pauper patients the hospital was only a swifter and surer death. The parliament of Paris took up the cause of these estimable ladies, claiming that their offices were purely secular. The king's council declared them spiritual, and therefore subject to the archbishop. Whereupon, the parliament refused to register the royal declaration, and ceased to administer justice; the lawyers closed their offices; and while every branch of the government was in this broil, so trivial and so atrocious, poor invalids died for want of help.

Extreme unction was soon after refused to the Abbé le Maire, a venerable priest, known of old as a leader of the Jansenists. The parliament remained in session till midnight, discussing this new outrage; they condemned the Molinist curé, "ordered" the archbishop to put a stop to such scandals, and dispatched their solicitor-general to entreat him to administer the sacraments to the dying abbé. The prelate allowed him to die without the last rites, and hurried out to Versailles to complain to the king that the parliament was laying its hands upon holy things.

There was another violent rupture between the king and the parliament. The king ordered the proceedings against the curé to be canceled; whereupon the parliament issued an order for his arrest, and sent officers in quest of him. The curé escaped, and the king annulled the order for his arrest. Some of the

wisest and most eminent members of the parliament went to the king, and remonstrated with him with warmth and eloquence, dwelling especially upon the obvious fact that the shame of these occurrences fell finally upon religion itself. The king replied vaguely and coldly. The next day the parliament, receiving no satisfaction from the government, issued a solemn ordinance, in which it engaged not to cease its endeavors to repress such scandals; declaring that the Bull Unigenitus was not an article of faith, and ought not to come between an accused person and the administration of justice. More than ten thousand copies of this ordinance were instantly sold in Paris, and the word passed everywhere, "*This* is my *billet de confession!*"[1]

The mania of refusing the sacraments to dying Jansenists could not fail to spread into the provinces, because Boyer had the bestowal of everything which ambitious ecclesiastics coveted. At such a time, especially in France, the air is filled with exasperating anecdotes. A priest of the diocese of Langres, while publicly giving the communion to two girls accused of Jansenism, said to them, "I give you the communion as Jesus gave it to Judas." The young women entered complaint against him, and the local parliament condemned him to apologize, and to pay to each of the two communicants a marriage portion of fifteen hundred francs. Everywhere there was the most menacing divergence between the parliaments and the bishops; the king always, in the last resort, siding with the ecclesiastics, who thus invoked the destruction both of their order and of his.

If ever men could be truly said to "sap the foundations of throne and altar," it was Boyer and the Archbishop of Paris. Nothing could recall them to reason. From 1749, the contention grew every year more heated and irreconcilable, until, in December, 1756, the king, in a solemn bed of justice, held at Versailles, attended by the peers and dignitaries of his kingdom, conceded to the ecclesiastics nearly everything they claimed, limited the ancient prerogatives of the parliaments, and forbade them to cease administering justice, "under penalty of disobedience." One hundred and eighty members resigned their judicial offices. Everything betokened confusion, when

[1] Histoire du Parlement de Paris, par Voltaire, chapter lxv.

the penknife of Damiens, in a day, restored the royal prestige, and enabled the king to end his days an absolute monarch. "After us the deluge," said Madame de Pompadour; and the king made the same remark, with less point. The disasters of the Seven Years' War quickly followed, forcing the public mind into other channels; and thus these menacing questions, as to the rights of man, the rights of conscience, and the general ownership of France, were postponed for thirty-two years.

Nothing allayed the unteachable zeal of the ecclesiastics; their policy and their temper remained unchanged. Boyer died in 1755; but, during the whole of his tenure of power, he had appointed bishops and archbishops of his own kind; and hence the strife between the intellect of France and its enemies continued.

From the first, Boyer and such as he had viewed the Encyclopædia, conducted by Diderot and D'Alembert, with natural aversion. This work was an honest and patriotic scheme to make the knowledge possessed by the few accessible to the many. The plan of the editors was the same as that now pursued in the execution of similar works among ourselves: each subject was assigned to be treated by the person or persons best acquainted with it; and was to be handled with as near an approach to freedom as the censors would permit. Rousseau wrote upon music; D'Alembert upon mathematics and the sciences dependent; Marmontel upon literary subjects; Haller upon physiology; Holback upon chemistry; Turgot upon subjects appertaining to political economy. Montesquieu left an unfinished article for it; Condorcet was a contributor; Buffon gave it assistance. Diderot frequented workshops, bazaars, the quays, counting-rooms, vineyards, farms, factories, laying under contribution the practical men, who had rare and precious knowledge, which they could put into iron and fabrics, and make France rich, attractive, and comfortable with it, but could not arrange clearly upon paper. It was altogether a noble design, to which the best mind, heart, and taste of France warmly rallied, and from which no class had anything to fear, unless it throve upon the credulity and degradation of the human mind.

It had no warmer friend in France than Voltaire, who, from the day of its announcement in 1750, had not ceased to labor

for it with patriotic enthusiasm and disinterestedness. What could he personally gain from anonymous articles in such a work? He not only wrote for it, but gave valuable hints and suggestions to the editors, as well as much sound advice. He cautioned them, for example, in several amusing letters, not to be biased in their judgments by patriotic feeling. "Why," he asks D'Alembert, "do you say that the sciences are more indebted to France than to any other nation? Is it to the French that we are indebted for the quadrant, the fire-engine, the theory of light, inoculation, the seed-sower? *Parbleu*, you are jesting! We have invented only the wheelbarrow."

He was still in Prussia when the first volume appeared; and it was in Prussia that he heard of the danger which threatened the enterprise, even in its infancy. A young Frenchman arrived in Berlin in 1752, a fugitive from Paris, the Abbé de Prades, bearing a letter of introduction to him from D'Alembert. This abbé told his story: how he had passed his theological examination triumphantly at the Sorbonne, his thesis being unanimously approved by the hundred doctors of that ancient institution, which was to orthodox theology what the French Academy was to polite literature; how, after this honorable unanimous admission to the Sorbonne, he had accepted an invitation from Diderot to write some of the theological articles for the Encyclopædia; how this deeply offended the Jesuit authors of the "Dictionnaire de Trévoux," which the new work "effaced" in public estimation; how the Jesuit fathers, who had expected to contribute the theological articles, had risen upon this young doctor, stirred up all the powers against him, and even induced the Sorbonne itself to reverse its approval of his thesis; how the Anc. Bishop of Mirepoix, deaf to justice and to policy, had menaced him with a *lettre de cachet*, in terror of which he had fled to Berlin, a ruined man, a fugitive, not from his country only, but from his career, begun with high hopes and most auspicious promise.

To all of which, related in ample detail, Voltaire listened with indignant, sympathizing mind. The King of Prussia being absent at the time, he gave the abbé generous entertainment, and, on Frederic's return, procured for him the place of reader to the king, lately vacated by the worthy Darget.

Voltaire published the story in 1752, in a pamphlet, under

the title of "Le Tombeau de la Sorbonne," an astounding record of what educated men will do when folly and hypocrisy are the price of great offices and rich revenues. From this pamphlet we learn that it cost the Sorbonne throes of anguish to censure what it had, a short time before, unanimously approved. Forty of the doctors sided with the Abbé de Prades, and refused to give themselves the lie. At one wild session two of them came to blows. "You are a liar!" cried one. The learned theologian who was thus addressed rushed toward the speaker, pressed through a crowd of reverend fathers, and got in some good blows before he could be torn away.

One touch in the "Tombeau de la Sorbonne" remains a by-word to this day: "The doctors, ashamed of this scene, regained their calm. Silence was restored; the debate proceeded with more moderation. At length, the voting began. The curé of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois arrives, and forces his way through the throng. 'Gentlemen,' he cries, 'I have business! I come only to cast my vote. *I am of the opinion of Tamponnet.*' Having thus spoken, he withdrew, and the assembly, who just before were ready to fight, roared with laughter."

Soon after the abbé was established at Berlin came tidings that the first two volumes of the Encyclopædia were suppressed by a decree of the king in council. As this decree did not forbid the continuance of the work, the editors, after some delay, resumed their labors; nor was the decree of suppression enforced. Every year a new volume appeared, and was gladly received by the subscribers, although nearly every article was marred in some degree by the hand or the fears of timid censors. Beginning with two thousand subscribers, the publishers sold nearly four thousand of the seventh volume, and the influence of the work was visibly extending. To understand what the Encyclopædia was to the French people of that generation, the reader has but to lay open before him, in some public library, a Bayle of 1736, a "Dictionnaire de Trévoux," and the early volumes of the Encyclopædia. The superiority of the new work was manifest and immense; it would have been greater but for the dread of interference and suspension that hung over the minds of the conductors.

The ridiculous penknife of crazy Damiens enabled the hostile priests, in the spring of 1757, to procure a royal edict that

threatened with *death* the authors, publishers, and sellers of books of which Molinist bishops disapproved: —

"WHEREAS, the ceaseless attention which the king is bound to exercise in maintaining the order and tranquillity of the public, and in repressing whatever could disturb it, does not permit him to suffer the unbridled license of the writings which are spread throughout the kingdom, and which tend to attack religion, excite the minds of the people, and impair his authority; and as the kings, his predecessors, have at different times opposed the severity of the laws to similar evil, THEREFORE, all persons who shall be convicted of having composed and printed writings tending to attack religion, to excite the minds of the people, to impair the royal authority, and disturb the order and tranquillity of the state shall be punished with death, as well as the printers, colporteurs, and others who shall have spread them abroad."

The same edict assigned the penalty of the galleys to whomsoever published writings without legal permit, and forbade, under penalty of six thousand francs fine, the printing of anything whatever in a private house or monastery.[1]

This decree, which was published a few days after the execution of Damiens, was regarded as one of the panic measures of the moment. Nevertheless, within six months, advocate Barbier recorded in his diary some terrible sentences under it: La Martelière, verse writer, for printing clandestinely Voltaire's "Pucelle" and other "such" works, nine years in the galleys; eight printers and binders, employed in the same printing-office, to the pillory and three years' banishment; the Abbé de Capmartin, for composing works "calculated to disturb the tranquillity of the state," nine years in the galleys, branding on the shoulder, and degradation from his ecclesiastical rank.

The same chronicler, however, informs us that romances and "curious books," as he calls them, such as Montesquieu's "Spirit of the Laws," Mirabeau's "Ami des Hommes," documents and pamphlets relating to the king's contest with the parliament, "La Pucelle," and, in a word, whatever books the public mind eagerly craved, were sold everywhere with scarcely the pretense of secrecy, and made many booksellers

[1] 6 Journal de Barbier, 522, April, 1757.

rich. There were seventy-three periodicals then published in Paris, and there was an intellectual movement of such activity and vehemence that it was not possible to suppress it.

At such times, it is the best books that the censor can most easily and safely obstruct; it was therefore the authors of the Encyclopædia who were the worst sufferers from the new courage of the hierarchy. France was faring ill in the war; she was losing Canada, losing India, losing ships, losing prestige, losing confidence and hope. We find, everywhere and always, that whatever depresses man exalts and exaggerates the priest. In Peru and Mexico the priest has everything and is everything. "I draw a kind of glory," wrote Frederic to Voltaire, in remarking upon the burning of good books in Paris by the hangman, "that the epoch of the war which France wages against me becomes that of the war waged at Paris against good sense." These two wars, indeed, bore to one another the relation of cause and effect. The war with Frederic and England, which depressed and impoverished Frenchmen, gave French bishops an access of courageous insolence which first drove the editors of the Encyclopædia to despair, and then put a sudden stop to their labors. Sensitive D'Alembert, never a robust man, was the first to give up. He wrote to Voltaire, January 11, 1758: —

"I know not if the Encyclopædia will be continued. What is certain is, it will not be continued by me. I have notified M. de Malesherbes [minister] and the publishers that they must seek my successor. I am worn out with the affronts and vexations of every kind which this work draws upon us. The odious and even infamous satires which are published against it, and which are not only tolerated, but protected, authorized, applauded, nay, commanded, by those who have authority in their hands, ... all these reasons, joined to several others, oblige me to renounce forever that accursed work."

Voltaire replied, in a letter noteworthy on many accounts, January 19, 1758: —

"I have sent you 'Hémistiche' and 'Heureux,' which you asked me to write. 'Hémistiche' is not a very brilliant commission. Nevertheless, by decorating it a little, I have, perhaps, written an article useful for men of letters and amateurs.[1] Nothing is to be disdained;

[1] See this article, Hémistiche, in the Philosophical Dictionary, — an agreeable piece of half a dozen pages, such as an editor must have been delighted to get.

and I will do the word Comma, if you wish it. I say to you again, I shall always add with great pleasure some grains of sand to your pyramid; but do not, then, abandon it; do not do what your ridiculous enemies wish; do not, then, give them that impertinent triumph. For forty years I have carried on the wretched trade of man of letters, and for forty years I have been overwhelmed with enemies. I could make a library of the abuse which has been vomited against me, and the calumnies which have been poured out with lavish hand. I was alone, without a single partisan, without any support, and delivered over to the beasts, like an early Christian. It was thus that I passed my life at Paris. You are assuredly not in that cruel and humiliating situation, which was the only recompense of my labors. You are a member of two academies, pensioned by the king [of Prussia]. This grand work of the Encyclopædia, in which the nation ought to be interested, is yours in common with a dozen superior men, who ought to make common cause with you. Why do you not address yourselves in a body to M. de Malesherbes? Why do you not prescribe the conditions on which you will continue? There is need of your work; it has become necessary. . . . . Bestir yourselves, and you will be the masters. I talk to you like a republican; but, also, the matter concerns the republic of letters. Oh, poor republic!"

To this letter the too susceptible D'Alembert replied at much length, in a strain of mingled pathos and indignation. "I doubt," he concluded, "if your article upon History[1] can pass with the new censors. But nothing presses; I doubt if the eighth volume is ever printed. Think of the crowd of articles which it is now impossible to write: Heresy, Hierarchy, Indulgence, Infallibility, Immortality, Immaterial, Hebrews, Hobbism, Jesus Christ, Jesuits, Inquisition, Jansenists, Intolerance, and so many others. Again I say, we must stop where we are."

The editor may naturally enough have doubted whether the article upon History would pass. The first page contained a Voltairean definition of Sacred History, which a French censor of that time would have first enjoyed, and then erased: "Sacred History is a series of operations, divine and miraculous, by which it pleased God formerly to conduct the Jewish nation, and to-day to exercise our faith."

D'Alembert withdrew, and Diderot struggled on alone. The seventh volume had just been issued, the eighth was in course

[1] See the article in the Philosophical Dictionary.

of preparation, when, in the spring of 1758, appeared the work of Helvetius upon the human mind, "De l'Esprit," — two volumes of harmless, entertaining speculation upon man and his motives, as they presented themselves to a rich, handsome, and popular man of the world. The book was unconventional; it contained Helvetius's genuine thoughts; and hence it was interesting, and not altogether without value, as any intelligent man's book will be, if he succeeds in following Dr. Johnson's advice, and clears his mind of cant. It seemed to this opulent and fortunate farmer-general that "physical susceptibility and memory produce all our ideas, and that all our false judgments are the effect either of our passions or of our ignorance." It was also his opinion that utility is the test of merit, and that our sense of utility determines our moral judgments. Thus, in France, where precious and portable property was everywhere exposed to view, stealing was a crime; but in Sparta, where there was nothing but chickens and vegetables to appropriate, and where vigilance and address were the price of independence, stealing was a virtuous act; getting found out was the crime.[1] There were many other amusing paradoxes, calculated to provoke thought, suggest agreeable conversation, and lead on toward better methods of investigation.

The moral of the whole was this: The chief duty of each generation being to educate the next, all is good that promotes and facilitates that supreme, never-ending task; all is bad that hinders it.

This brave book had a fortune resembling that of the thesis of the Abbé de Prades. The worthy Tercier, chief clerk in the department of foreign affairs, to whom the manuscript was submitted for examination, reported, "I have found nothing in it which, in my judgment, ought to prevent its publication." The work was accordingly printed, "with privilege," and the author sent copies to the queen and her court, he being her *maitre d'hôtel* and *protégé*. The public leaped at it. The second edition was quickly called for; all the world decried and devoured it. The pious, limited Dauphin was seen rushing toward his mother's apartments, with the volumes in his hand, saying, "I am going to the queen to show her the

[1] De l'Esprit, volume i., chapter xiii.

fine things which her *maitre d'hôtel* has printed!" Perhaps he showed her the place where the sustained power and elegance of the "illustrious" Voltaire are extolled; perhaps he ran a wrathful finger down the page in which the persecution of philosophers by fanatic devotees is descanted upon, or pointed to the top of the next page, where the inquisitors who condemned Galileo are frankly styled "imbeciles." It is more probable that the young heir to the throne showed her the paragraph in which the English are censured for styling Charles I. a martyr. Very probably he directed her attention to the place where it is said that republics foster virtue better than monarchies: a cooper with mind, in a republic, might turn out a Themistocles, a Marius; "at Paris you will make a Cartouche of him!"

It was enough. Poor Tercier, who had seen no harm in a chatty, rash, good-tempered book like this, was turned out of his two offices, worth to him twenty thousand francs a year. The royal privilege was revoked, but not before two editions were published *cum privilegio*. The book was suppressed, and, along with eight others, one of which was Voltaire's "Loi Naturelle," it was publicly burned by the hangman, with all the usual ceremonies. Helvetius's book pleased scarcely any one; its audacities were not flattering to human nature; and the lightness of its tone offended many. Voltaire regretted its appearance almost as much as he wondered at the excitement it created. "What a fuss about an omelet!" he cried. Others blamed the author for "blabbing everybody's secret." Emboldened by this uproar of censure, of which the whole body of "philosophers" had their share, the government, in March, 1759, by royal decree, canceled the privilege which had been enjoyed by the Encyclopædia since 1746. The sale of the seven volumes was prohibited, and the further issue of the work forbidden. This decree, it is true, was not executed to the letter, but only in the spirit. The volumes continued to appear, but they were emasculated and disfigured; furnishing annual proof that the weakest governments are mighty to prevent good.[1]

It so chanced that, at the time of the public burning of the

[1] See for full details of this melancholy history "Diderot," by John Morley, chapter v.

nine books in Paris and the suspension of the Encyclopædia, there was displayed on every bookseller's counter in the city the Abbé de Caveirac's new work of edification, entitled "Apology for Louis XIV. and his Council touching the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, with a Dissertation upon the Day of St. Bartholomew;" in which the author asserted that the expulsion of the Huguenots was a good to France, and that religion had nothing to do with the massacres. This was the work of which Voltaire wrote, "I have bought a bear; I shall put that book in his cage. What! they persecute M. Helvetius, and endure monsters!"

These were some of the events which kindled afresh the ire of Voltaire against *l'Infâme*, and caused him, while he was getting his new estates in order, to devote the remainder of his days to crushing it. He thought he could do this. Twelve illiterate men, he would say, founded a religion; cannot a band of philosophers eradicate *l'Infâme?* He fully believed they could, and he therefore entered upon the work with as much confidence as zeal. He had discovered, from the experiment of Doctor Akakia, the might of ridicule, when the object assailed is in itself ridiculous. But this was only one of his weapons; his fame, his works, his kings, his allies in Paris, public events, his letters and conversation, his throngs of visitors, the errors of the enemy, all were destined to be promptly utilized. The existing generation of Frenchmen himself had educated. An author, as Wordsworth remarks, has to create the taste which he gratifies; and we find the Parisians of that time curiously susceptible to Voltaire's lightest word. He also knew well the public he had formed, and it lent itself readily to his influence. The *régime*, too, as we well know, was a house divided against itself, and the very censors who condemned a book often loved it. The king himself was absurdly inconsistent: he permitted Tercier to be dismissed from his offices for relishing Helvetius's book, and then pensioned him, took him into confidence, employed him in secret service, and gave him an old age of peaceful study. Voltaire's "Natural Religion" was burnt by the hangman in March, 1759, and continued to be sold everywhere for two francs. He could send a little manuscript to Thieriot by a safe hand, and in a week the whole of the reading public of the city was laughing over it.

Madame Denis found him unmanageable from 1759. A few days after the news reached their retreat of the solemn burning of "De l'Esprit" and the "Loi Naturelle," she wrote to one of her friends: —

"My uncle is always at work. He does a hundred different things at once. His genius retains its vigor. A certain letter has appeared in the 'Mercury' which I should so much have wished him to suppress. I can no longer do anything in that way. I am so convinced of this that very often I avoid reading his manuscripts. Age has given him an invincible obstinacy, against which it is impossible to struggle; it is the only mark of old age that I perceive in him. Be sure, therefore, when you see things which he had better not have written, that I groan over them without being able to prevent their appearance. If I were not sensitive I should be very happy. He is very kind to me, provided I avoid making the least objection to anything that he does. This is the course which I have adopted, and I find it answers very well."[1]

The King of Prussia, also, from the midst of his armies, observed the renewed zeal of his old master, and wrote of it as men of the world usually do of such things. The following was a famous passage in its day, and is still quoted: —

"Your zeal burns against the Jesuits and the superstitions. You do well to combat error; but do you believe that the world will change? The human mind is weak; more than three fourths of mankind are formed to be the slaves of the absurdest fanaticism. The fear of the devil and of hell is fascinating to them, and they detest the sage who wishes to enlighten them. The mass of our species is stupid [*sot*] and wicked. I look in vain among them for that image of God of which, the theologians assure us, they carry the imprint. Every man has a wild beast within him. Few know how to enchain him; most men let loose the rein when the terror of the laws does not restrain them."

Madame du Deffand often wrote in a similar strain. She assured him that every person of sense thought as he did; why then continue? "It is only the charm of your style that makes people read with pleasure what you write on that subject; for, as to the substance of the matter, it interests them no more than the mythology of the ancients."

No remonstrance moved him; he had enlisted for the war. "If," he wrote to D'Argental, "the enemies of common sense

[1] Voltaire à Ferney, page 61.

have the power (which I do not believe they have) to persecute me, girdled as I am by eighty leagues of mountains that touch the sky, I have, God be thanked, forty-five thousand livres of annual revenue in foreign countries, and I would willingly abandon what remains to me in France to go and despise, at my ease, in other lands, and with a sovereign contempt, the insolent *bourgeois*, whom the king likes no more than I do. Pardon, my divine angel, this enthusiasm; it is of a heart naturally sympathetic; he who knows not how to hate knows not how to love." And to Helvetius: "It is to the king's interest that philosophers should increase in number, and fanatics diminish. We are tranquil, and all those people are disturbers of the peace; we are good citizens, and they are seditious; we cultivate reason in peace, and they persecute it. They can cause some good books to be burned, but we will *crush* them in society; we will reduce them to be without credit in good company; and it is good company alone that governs the opinions of men."

It was in this spirit, it was after this provocation, that he set himself to the task of crushing *l'Infâme*. In following chapters we shall see some of his methods of proceeding. His health was renewed; his spirits, as Marmontel has shown us, were high; his leisure was deliciously employed; his General History was off his hands; "La Pucelle" alarmed him no more; ten minutes' walk took him out of France; and, as he has just told us, he had forty-five thousand francs per annum which the government of France could not confiscate. ÉCRASEZ L'INFÂME.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE STORM OF MONOSYLLABLES.

A CERTAIN Father Berthier, the plodding, indefatigable editor of a "religious weekly" of Paris, called the "Journal de Trévoux," the organ of the Jesuits, was the first to draw his fire.

Voltaire had retained a kindly feeling for the Jesuits, by whom he had been educated; and members of the order were still among his friendly correspondents. For some time past, however, the "Journal de Trévoux" had pursued with fresh zeal the vocation of the religious newspaper, which was and is to convey the truths it hates to minds most in need of them. In other words, this journal had assailed with weak and blundering severity the Encyclopædia, Voltaire's "Essai sur les Mœurs," his poem upon Natural Religion, and other works of humanizing tendency. But to denounce those works it was necessary to name, describe, and quote them, and thus to spread abroad some knowledge of their contents among the class which the works themselves would not otherwise have reached.

Écrasez l'Infâme! On a day in December, 1759, appeared in Paris an anonymous pamphlet of thirty pages, entitled "Narrative of the Sickness, Confession, Death, and Reappearance of the Jesuit Berthier." No adequate idea can be given here of the comic richness of this burlesque, of which every sentence is a hit. The fun reaches its climax when a rival editor, a priest of a rival order, is hastily summoned to confess the dying Jesuit. It is known how tenderly the editors of rival periodicals of this kind loved one another in the last century. These two priests, who had contended for many years with pen and scissors, were unknown to each other personally, and the confession had proceeded far before either discovered who the other was. Poor Berthier at length finds himself in pur-

gatory, doomed to remain 333,333 years, 3 months, 3 weeks, and 3 days; and then only to be delivered when some brother of his order could be found who should be humble, peaceable, and without desire to go to court, who should not calumniate any one to princes, not mingle in worldly affairs, make no one yawn with his writings, and, finally, be willing to apply to Father Berthier all his merits. "What is your penance in purgatory?" The reply was, "I am obliged to make every morning the chocolate of a Jansenist, to read aloud at dinner-time a Provincial Letter, and to employ myself the rest of the time in mending the chemises of the nuns of Port Royal." Every phrase is an allusion, half lost upon us at this distance of time, but not lost upon the susceptible Parisians of 1759.

Before this burlesque tale had spent its force, another pamphlet, by the same anonymous and well-known hand, pervaded the city, entitled "Narrative of the Journey of Brother Garassise, Nephew of Brother Garasse, Successor to Father Berthier, and what followed, in Anticipation of what is to follow." This relates the election of Father Berthier's successor. Fréron is a candidate. A learned brother objects in terms like these: "My friend, you have, it is true, great qualities; but it is said in Cicero, 'Cast not the children's bread to the dogs.'" The place is given finally to Brother Garassise, who claims to possess the pen of Berthier, the insipidity of Catron, the antitheses of Porée, and the dryness of Daniel. He was the man to succeed the wearisome Berthier; who, however, continued for many years to bestow his tediousness upon his countrymen. But no reader of these two pamphlets could ever again have heard or seen his name without a smile. The ingenuity of the author is shown in the manner in which he conveys at every moment an impression of the childish ignorance of the ecclesiastical mind and the triviality of ecclesiastical topics.

The Jesuits attempted a retaliation in kind. There was published in 1761, at Geneva and Paris, a pamphlet entitled "Narrative of the Sickness, Confession and End of M. de Voltaire, and what followed, by Me, Jos. Dubois." La Harpe deemed this piece not altogether unsuccessful, but Voltaire pronounced it a "flat imitation" of his burlesque. He was preparing to pursue Berthier further, when more important game drew his attention. The next affair amused the reading

people of Europe for many months, and averted from France a truly portentous evil.

A new royal family was growing up then in France. That ill-starred prince, who was one day to reign and perish as Louis XVI., was in 1760 a heavy, tractable boy, six years old, and he was the Dauphin's third son. The royal boys were at an age when a tutor was usually appointed; and the office of tutor had twice, within living memory, led to positions of overmastering influence. De Fleury, prime minister for nearly a generation, had been tutor to Louis XV.; Boyer, Anc. Bishop of Mirepoix, had been tutor to his only son, the present Dauphin. The question, therefore, who should be again put on this directest road to the summits of power was big with interest to society, and to patriotism. A candidate appeared in the spring of 1760: a country magistrate, Le Franc, Marquis of Pompignan, a minor poet of some merit, author of many psalms and other verse, some of which was more than respectable. His strength lay in the fact that he was the last author of *any* recognized rank that was left on the orthodox side. In his youth, he had coquetted with deism, and had even translated into French verse Pope's "Universal Prayer;" but his later psalms had made amends, and he now stood forth a champion of the faith. He had a younger brother, the Bishop of Puy, a not illiberal ecclesiastic, a zealous and industrious defender of the church.

These two men hung over France in 1760 as its probable masters, the Dauphin being precisely the man to be governed by such a pair; for he had an inkling of *esprit*, and a solid preponderance of unquestioning faith. The marquis, recently enriched by marriage, the oracle of his native remote Montauban, a man of inordinate vanity, came to Paris in the early days of 1760 on an errand of deepest interest to him. He had been elected to the seat in the French Academy last filled by Maupertuis; in March he was publicly received, when he delivered the usual speech commemorative of his predecessor. In this oration, he made what was felt to be a bid for the tutorship of the Dauphin's children, by attacking, almost by name, several of his most distinguished colleagues. He violated the sanctity of a place which all parties had hitherto cherished as an asylum of peace and good-temper amid em-

bittered controversies. In the course of his harangue, he fell upon the age itself as vaunting its superior light, while producing little but false science and shameful literature.

"What do we behold?" asked the speaker. "Here, an immense succession of scandalous libels, insolent verses, writings frivolous or licentious; there, in the class of philosophers, is seen a long display of rash opinions, systems openly impious, or direct insinuations against religion; elsewhere, the historian presents to us facts malignly disguised, satiric darts aimed at things the most holy, and against the soundest maxims of government. All, in a word, that these numberless books contain, bears the imprint of a depraved literature, corrupt morals, and an arrogant philosophy, which saps equally the throne and the altar."

The orator resumed his seat, after three quarters of an hour of this, amid applause that seemed general because it was loud; for this style of remark was then the short way to court favor; it was the fashionable hue and cry of the moment. The chairman of the session complimented the new member warmly, and ventured to bring the orator's brother, the Bishop of Puy, into view, in a manner that is not forgotten in France to this day. He compared the magistrate to Moses, and the bishop to Aaron! "Everything retraces in you," said the chairman, "the image of those two brothers who were consecrated, the one to be judge of Israel, and the other as pontiff to work miracles in Israel." It was safe to stand well with these brothers; for who could say how soon they might be astride of France? Le Franc enjoyed a day of cloudless triumph, which many men have since enjoyed by similar means. He was admitted to the king's presence, to present in person a copy of his discourse. "I promise you that I will read it," said the king; and he kept his word. The same day, the king asked one of his court what he thought of it. "I found it a little long, sire," was the reply. "True," said the king. "I was twenty minutes reading it, and it must have been longer at the Academy; but, in my opinion, it is an excellent work, and not at all likely to be applauded by the impious and headstrong."

This king, as the reader remembers, was then in the Deer Park period of his history. In the interregnum of mistresses, between Pompadour and Dubarry, young girls of fourteen and

thirteen were bought for him; and so pious was this father of his people that he insisted on their saying their prayers at night, and set them an edifying example by kneeling beside them. He was so pious that when the host went by he would get out of his carriage, and kneel to it in the mud, to the transport of some spectators.

Le Franc de Pompignan was well pleased with his day's work at the Academy. His discourse was promptly forwarded to Ferney. It was Le Franc who then held Voltaire's former post of historiographer of France; a circumstance that gave point to the new member's reflections upon historical literature. A few days after, a duodecimo pamphlet of seven pages, dateless, anonymous, without name of publisher or place, snowed down upon Paris, and was seen everywhere at once. The following is a translation of it: —

THE WHENS:

BEING USEFUL NOTES UPON A DISCOURSE PRONOUNCED BEFORE THE FRENCH ACADEMY, MARCH 10, 1760.

"WHEN one has the honor to be received into an honorable society of men of letters, it is not necessary that his reception speech should be a satire against men of letters; it is to insult the society and the public.

"WHEN, by chance, one is rich, it is not necessary to have the base cruelty to reproach men of letters with their poverty in an academical discourse, and to say, with pride, that they declaim against riches, and that they in secret envy the rich: (1) because the new member cannot know what his less opulent colleagues secretly think; (2) because none of them envy the new member.

"WHEN one does not honor his age by his works, it is a strange temerity in him to decry his age.

"WHEN one is scarcely a man of letters at all, and not in the least a philosopher, it does not become him to say that our nation has only a false literature and a vain philosophy.

"WHEN one has translated, and even disfigured, the 'Prayer of the Deist,' composed by Pope; WHEN one has been deprived six entire months of his office in the country for having translated and envenomed that formula of deism; WHEN, finally, one has been indebted to philosophers for the enjoyment of that office, it is to be at once wanting in gratitude, in truth, and in justice to accuse the philosophers of impiety; and it is to outrage all the proprieties to presume to speak of religion in a public discourse, before an academy, whose

maxim and law it is never to speak upon that subject in its assemblies.

"When a man pronounces before an academy one of those discourses which are spoken of for a day or two, and which are even sometimes carried to the foot of the throne, it is to be culpable towards one's fellow-citizens to dare to say in that discourse that the philosophy of our times saps the foundations of the throne and of the altar. It is to play the part of a calumniator to dare to assert that hatred of authority is the dominant character of our productions; and it is to be a calumniator with very odious imposture as well, since men of letters are not only the most submissive subjects, but they have no privilege, no prerogative, which can ever give them the least pretext not to be submissive. Nothing is more criminal than the desire to give to princes and ministers ideas so unjust concerning faithful subjects, whose studies do honor to the nation: but, fortunately, princes and ministers do not read those discourses, and those who have read them once will read them no more.

"When one succeeds an oddity of a man, who had the misfortune to deny in a bad book the obvious proofs of the existence of a God, drawn from the designs, the harmonies, and the ends of all the works of creation, the only proofs admitted by philosophers, and the only proofs consecrated by the fathers of the church; when that odd person did all that he could to weaken those striking testimonies of all nature; when, in lieu of those striking proofs which enlighten all eyes, he ridiculously substituted an equation of algebra, it is not necessary to say that that reasoner was an atheist, because it is not proper to accuse any one of atheism, and still less the man whom one succeeds; but, also, it is not necessary to propose him as the model of religious writers; he should be silent, or at least speak with more art and decency.

"When one addresses an academy in France, it is not becoming to get into a fury against the philosophers which England has produced; it is necessary rather to study them.

"When one is admitted into a respectable body, he ought, in his address, to conceal under the veil of modesty the insolent pride which characterizes hot-heads and mediocre talents."[1]

This moderate and just rebuke had instantaneous success with the public. The repetition of the *when* was a kind of device that easily "brings down the house," whether in or out of the theatre. Several diarists note the immediate interest which the little pamphlet excited in all circles. The Abbé

[1] 61 Œuvres de Voltaire, 108, 97-volume ed.

Morellet, then in the flower of his age, a recent acquisition to the philosophic band, followed up the stroke with his "Ifs," and, soon after, with his "Wherefores," — deeming it just, as he remarks, to make Le Franc run the gauntlet of the particles. Both of these pamphlets hitting the humor of the public, the abbé followed them with a reproduction of Le Franc's forgotten translation of Pope's "Universal Prayer," to which he appended notes and comments. Voltaire then took another turn with a song, in four stanzas, entitled "The Tos," which he followed with "The Thats," "The Whos," "The Whys," "The Yeses," and "The Noes." An epigram flew from hand to hand: "Do you know why Jeremiah wept so much during his life-time? It was because he foresaw, prophet-like, that one day he would be translated by Le Franc." Other hands contributed, and not a week passed without some new jest in prose or verse escaping into print, aimed at the luckless Academician. Voltaire unearthed Le Franc's early tragedy, "Dido," of which he published some ludicrous morsels, with such commentary as he knew how to give. He told Marmontel that his physician had ordered him to hunt Pompignan for an hour or two every morning, for the benefit of his health. The poor man could not show himself anywhere without exciting merriment.

He seemed buried, as Madame du Deffand said, under "mountains of ridicule," and well deserved to be, she thought; for he was not a simpleton merely, but hypocritical and malign.[1] But he was not so easily killed, still less buried. Much is allowed to a man who takes the king's side. He increased the general mirth by the wonderfully absurd way in which he defended himself. In reply to Morellet, he published a serious and minute narrative to show that his translation of the "Universal Prayer" was merely an exercise in English, published without his knowledge, and executed twenty-two years before. Exasperated by the relentless hail of sharp particles, he carried his absurdity to the point of addressing a remonstrance on the subject to the king and queen, which drew upon him still more stinging derision. "The whole court," said he, "was witness of the reception which their majesties accorded me. It is necessary that the universe should know, also, that

[1] Madame du Deffand to Voltaire, July 23, 1760.

their majesties appeared to occupy themselves with my work, not as a passing or unimportant novelty, but as a production which was not unworthy of the particular attention of the sovereigns."

Nothing, it would seem, could heighten the ridicule of this performance; but Voltaire pounced upon it, and prolonged the merriment with which it was received even to the present day. A little piece was issued from what Baron Grimm styled the manufactory at Ferney, purporting to be an extract from the newspaper of Le Franc's city of Montauban, which represented his townsmen as alarmed for his sanity, and sending a committee to Paris to ascertain the truth. The committee found him raving mad, uttering snatches of crazy verse (selected from his own works), while he foamed at the mouth and gritted his teeth. The messengers burst into tears, and returned to Montauban to report the melancholy tidings. But this was a trifle compared with a poem from the same source, called "La Vanité," a work of great satiric force, in Voltaire's peculiar style of serious and weighty badinage. Some of the lines of this poem are familiar now to conversation in France.

"Qu'as-tu, petit bourgeois d'une petite ville?
. . . . . .
L'univers, mon ami, ne pense point à toi.
. . . . . .
César n'a point d'asile où son ombre repose;
Et l'ami Pompignan pense être quelque chose!"[1]

Poor Pompignan fled before the storm to his native city; where, however, he retained a certain hold upon the court from the very violence of this attack. He was by no means yet destroyed as a candidate for court favor, and we shall see the king seizing opportunities to distinguish him.

[1] What is the matter with you, little *bourgeois* of a little city? . . . . The universe, my friend, is not in the least thinking of you. . . . . Cæsar has no asylum where his shade reposes; and friend Pompignan thinks to be something.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE WAR OF COMEDIES.

Le Franc de Pompignan vanished for a time. The monosyllables seemed to have done their work. While the air was still all alive with those singing and stinging particles, the scene of strife was suddenly transferred to the national theatre of France.

A dramatist was found who was bold enough to place the philosophers upon the stage of the Théâtre-Français, for idle Parisians to laugh at. It was Charles Palissot who thus courted the fate of Le Franc by his comedy of "Les Philosophes," produced May 2, 1760. This author, though not equal to the part he had undertaken, was a man of talent, and was supported in this attempt by two ladies of high rank and great vogue: the Princess de Robecq, a Montmorenci by birth, and the Duchess of Villeroi, of royal lineage. The Princess de Robecq had the additional prestige of being, or having been, beloved by the Duke of Choiseul, prime minister. It was she, dying of consumption as she was, who leveled all obstacles, pushed aside a tragedy of Voltaire about to be revived, and gave away, as D'Alembert records, four hundred and fifty parquette tickets for the opening night of "Les Philosophes." The blunt D'Alembert describes the author of this piece as *maquereau de sa femme et banqueroutier*, and its lovely protectresses as *des p . . . . en fonctions, et des p . . . . honoraires.* The curiosity of the public and two or three really effective scenes gave the play a kind of party success that resounded through Europe.

It was a slight, foolish, amusing, well-written comedy in three acts, in which Helvetius, Diderot, Rousseau, D'Argental, and others were clearly indicated; and they were represented, not merely as ridiculous, but as "sappers of the throne and the altar," destroyers of domestic peace, disturbers of pub-

lic order, mercenary and false. The Encyclopædia is mentioned by name. The noted passage upon religion in the "Henriade" of Voltaire is slightly parodied. The best point is in Act I., Scene 5, where Cydalise, the deluded victim of the New Light, describes her late worthy husband, as viewed in the light of *pure reason:* a pitiably limited being, wholly occupied with his duties, private and public, a "savage defender of Gothic prejudices." There was the hint here of really great comedy, which should show how little human life or character will bear coldly literal treatment, and how necessary it is for us to see both more and less than there is. Helvetius was the best handled of the philosophers, because he had laid himself fairly open to satire by his ill-considered audacities. It was just also to exhibit J. J. Rousseau as one of those philanthropists who knew how

"Chérir tout l'Univers, excepté leurs enfans."[1]

The sensation of the play was in Scene 8 of Act III., where Crispin, personating Rousseau, comes upon the stage on all fours, with a lettuce in his pocket for provender, remarking that he has deliberately chosen the condition of a quadruped, as the result of a dominant taste for philosophy. "Upon these *four* pillars my body is better sustained, and I see fewer fools." Finally, of course, the mask is torn from the abominable philosophers; the lovers are restored to one another, and all is well.

One line of this play arrests attention: —

"*Crédule* est devenu l'équivalent de *sot*."[2]

It marks the humor of the time. The day was near at hand, if it had not yet come, when the line expressed what the circles of Paris fully believed to be true.

The comedy was received with acclamations that seemed as warm and as unanimous as those which had greeted Le Franc's academic speech. The Princess de Robecq, besides filling the house with friends and partisans, appeared in her box, where she welcomed the author at the end of the second act, in sight of the audience, gave him her hand, and complimented him with a show of enthusiasm. She was then obliged to leave the theatre, to which she was never able to return.

[1] To cherish all mankind, except their own children.

[2] *Believer* has become the equivalent of *simpleton.*

The applause, however, was neither unanimous nor disinterested. D'Alembert told Voltaire that the *few* spectators who were free to express their real opinion were revolted to such a point that, on the second night, fifty of the most libelous lines were suppressed. The Abbé Morellet was present on that second night, and went home after the play boiling with indignation. He seized his pen, and sat up till near the dawn writing a pamphlet, entitled "The Preface to the Comedy of the Philosophers;" in which he related, with a mixture of truth and burlesque, some of the less creditable events in the past life of Palissot, — an illegitimate mode of warfare, as the abbé afterwards confessed. The public received his essay with great favor, and the young humorist had the pleasure, as he tells us, of seeing "groups of readers in the Palais-Royal and the Tuileries bursting with laughter over it." His triumph was short. In the heat of composition he had made an allusion to the Princess de Robecq as "a great lady, very sick, who, before dying, had only desired one consolation, — that of being present at the first performance of this comedy; and who, having seen it, had said, 'Now, Lord, let thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen *revenge*.'"

The revenge referred to in this passage was upon Diderot, who had reflected upon the princess with severity in the preface to his "Fils Naturel." She sought vengeance by "protecting" Palissot's comedy, and exulted in its success as a triumph over Diderot and over Diderot's allies. Some one sent her a copy of Morellet's essay, marked as "from the author." She complained to her lover, the Duke of Choiseul, of this double indignity, and soon a *lettre de cachet* consigned the abbé to the Bastille, where he was confined for two months. The Princess de Robecq died, fifteen days after his incarceration, aged thirty-two years.[1]

Palissot sent a copy of "Les Philosophes" to Voltaire, with a highly complimentary letter, in which he owned that he had written his play to avenge the two princesses. This led to a long correspondence between them. Voltaire tried all his art to win Palissot over to do justice to the Encyclopædists, appealing to his sense of justice and to his patriotism. He defended the philosophers, and proved to him that Diderot had not

[1] 1 Mémoires de l'Abbé Morellet, 89.

libeled the princesses. Palissot, in his preface to his comedy, extolled Voltaire in terms that seemed extravagant. "You make me blush," wrote Voltaire, "when you print that I am superior to those whom you attack. I believe that I do make verses better than they, and even that I know as much of history as they; but, upon my God, upon my soul, I protest that I am scarcely their pupil in all the rest, old as I am." He called upon Palissot to avow to the public that he had never examined the Encyclopædia, and knew nothing of it except through the report of its enemies. *Then*, he could go on amusing the public with a good conscience. "A Frenchman who is not gay is a man out of his element. You write comedies; be joyous, then, and do not turn the amusement of the theatre into a criminal indictment."

He did not make a convert or a partisan of Palissot, though such letters as he wrote him might have gained a better man. In one of these humorous epistles, he begs Palissot to accuse his friends and himself of anything whatever except of not being good Christians. "Call me dotard, bad poet, plagiarist, ignoramus; but I am not willing to have my faith suspected. My curés gave me a good character, and I pray God every day for the soul of Brother Berthier."

While this amiable correspondence was going on, Voltaire was preparing a retort dramatic for the Théâtre-Français. He, too, was willing to abuse the stage of the national theatre, by making it a scene of contention; he was writing a comedy, the chief aim of which was to abase and ridicule an individual. After reading "Les Philosophes," he dashed upon paper, "in eight days," as he says, his comedy of "The Scotch Lass" (L'Écossaise); designed partly to defend his brethren the philosophers, but chiefly to destroy the prestige of Jean Fréron, the successor of Desfontaines, and now the most powerful enemy of the band of Encyclopædists. Fréron was the first of the Parisian editors who was able to live in sumptuous profusion from the profits of literary journalism. He inhabited elegant rooms, gave bountiful suppers, and incurred large debts. He encouraged young authors, and criticised the veterans of literature with a freedom which Paris found amusing. In the controversy between the Encyclopædists and *l'Infâme*, he took the side that journalists generally find to be the easiest way

to success; and, of late, he had been attacking them with fresh vivacity. No number of his "Année Littéraire" appeared without a paragraph designed to exhibit them in a light either odious or ridiculous. Palissot was a contributor; but, unlike Palissot, the editor was far from distinguishing between Voltaire and his allies; he assailed him in some form in almost every issue; and he had enough comic force to make most of his readers laugh with him. He diverted his subscribers this year by descanting upon Voltaire's new character of grand seigneur. It appears that, in pursuing before the courts a pirate publisher, who was a *vassal* of Tourney, Voltaire had signed a requisition thus: —

"Done at Tourney, by me, Count of Tourney."

His vassal neatly retorted by entitling the lawless pamphlet "Pieces from the Portfolio of Monsieur the Count of Tourney." The publication had great currency. The King of Prussia addressed one of his letters to the Count of Tourney, and there was much merriment at this new dignity of the author of "Zaïre." As a specimen of Fréron's manner, I give a few sentences of his on the subject: —

"You will ask me, perhaps, Who is this Monsieur the Count of Tourney? What! you don't know? So names himself that great poet, epic, tragic, comic, tragi-comic, heroic-comic, lyric, epigrammatic, satiric, cynic, episodic, philosophic; it is the title which is now assumed by that profound geometer, that transcendent Newtonian, that faithful historian, that chaste romancer, that universal man, who, by his genius and his knowledge, eclipses all writers, present, past, and to come, — in fact, M. de Voltaire. Don't think it a joke: he has bought the countship of Tourney, near Geneva; in consequence, he has himself styled, and signs all his dispatches, *Count of Tourney*. Thus we see him decorated with three different names, which may one day give tortures to the commentators. His name of *bourgeoisie* is Arouet; his name in poetry is Voltaire; and his name of *seigneurie* is *Count of Tourney*. Another ambition, very laudable, which has long tormented him, is to become secretary of state like Addison, or, at least, ambassador like Prior. His prayers are at length heard; for ought we not to regard him as minister-plenipotentiary of the Republic of Letters to the Republic of Geneva? There he watches day and night over the interests of our literature, availing himself of the freedom of the press in Geneva to enrich it with a thousand admirable works. If we should have the misfortune to lose him, it would be necessary to replace him

in that country by some skillful negotiator. But I doubt whether any other person, whoever he might be, would fill that honorable post with so much glory and success as His Excellency Monseigneur the Count of Tourney."[1]

This was attempted in Voltaire's own manner; but we do not find that a cat is amused when it comes her turn to be played *with*, as she plays every day with mice. In a more aggressive manner, Fréron had recently criticised the "Candide" of Voltaire, and his comedy of "La Femme qui a Raison." Any periodical, even the most remote, the most insignificant, can be an engine of mischief; indeed, it *is* the insignificant things that are endowed with the mischief-making power. "L'Année Littéraire" was the most formidable ally of *l'Infâme*, because it could marshal its columns for the attack every week of the year, and arm them with Voltaire's own weapons. Hence it was that Voltaire followed "Les Philosophes" with a comedy in prose in five acts ("L'Écossaise"), in which he endeavored to parry Palissot's stroke, and disable Fréron.

There are gleams of good comedy in this crude and hasty piece. The scene is laid in a London tavern; the heroine is a young lady of a distinguished family of Scotland, ruined in the late civil war. She had found refuge and concealment in this tavern, where she maintained herself and her maid by furtive needle-work. Fréron figures in the play as Frélon (*hornet*). He is portrayed as a Grub Street writer, always ready to manufacture infamy at "one pistole per paragraph." A frequenter of the coffee-room of this tavern, he discovers and betrays the young lady's lineage. He gives the secret of his vocation thus: "When I discover a trifling matter, I add something to it, and something added to something makes much."

Some of Palissot's points are amusingly burlesqued. "Philosophy is very dangerous," says a coffee-house politician; "it was philosophy that made us lose the island of Minorca. . . . . It is the philosophers who are lowering the public funds." Another cries, "We have much to fear this year for Jamaica; those philosophers will lose it for us." The character that saved the piece was Freeport, a bluff and burly British mer-

[1] Les Ennemis de Voltaire, page 215.

chant, — "one of those Englishmen who know how to give, but not how to behave;" perhaps the first presentation of the comedy Englishman on the French stage. George Coleman's adaptation of the play for the London theatre was entitled "The British Merchant," and, under that name, with a prologue by Garrick, it had much success in England in 1767.[1]

In the records of the Théâtre-Français, I know not if there is any first night more famous than that of the production of this comedy, July 26, 1760. Voltaire had employed his usual devices to secure a favorable hearing, and the philosophic brotherhood, led by D'Argental, rallied in great force. He gave out that the new work was a translation from the English of "M. Hume, author of 'Douglas,' a brother of M. David Hume, the celebrated philosopher," the translator being by "Jerôme Carré, a native of Montauban, driven thence by the persecution of M. le Franc de Pompignan, and now come to implore the protection of the Parisians." On the afternoon of the great day, a burlesque letter was circulated, in which Jerôme Carré complained of the exertions of M. Fréron to prevent the production of the piece. Curiosity being thus stimulated, and the house well packed, the comedy was received with that boisterous and continuous applause which usually attends a partisan play, when the author's party fills the judgment-seats in the parquette. It enjoyed, moreover, a first "run" of sixteen nights, being performed three times a week, and it was played in many of the large towns of Europe with great success.

"Yesterday, at the fourth representation," wrote D'Alembert to the author, "there was a larger audience than at the first. . . . . I have not yet seen it, and when I am asked why, I answer, 'If a shoe-black had insulted me, and he should be put in the pillory for it in front of my house, I should be in no haste to thrust my head out of the window.'"

The editor of the "Année Littéraire" half neutralized the effect of this stroke by his well-sustained affectation of indifference to it. His demeanor was masterly. His pretty wife and himself, on the opening night, appeared conspicuous among

[1] Coleman dedicated his version thus, on its appearance in print: "To Monsieur de Voltaire the following comedy, a tribute due to the author of 'L'Écossaise,' is inscribed by his obedient servant, George Coleman."

the spectators, and they joined in the laughter and applause, as though the matter concerned them no more than the rest of the audience. The piece was produced on a Saturday evening; Fréron's paper was published on Sundays. The very next day, therefore, he was able to retort; and he did so by inserting a pretty good burlesque, entitled "Account of a Great Battle." in which the noted philosophers who had led the applause were designated by the names applied to them in the comedy of "Les Philosophes." The "battle," said Fréron, was between men of taste, who wished the play to be hissed, and the philosophers, who wished it to be applauded; the latter being supported by all the rhymesters and prosy authors ridiculed in the "Année Littêraire."

"The redoubtable Dortidius [Diderot] was in the centre of the army; he had been elected general by a unanimous voice. His countenance was aflame, his looks were furious, his hair disheveled, all his senses were agitated, as when, dominated by his divine enthusiasm, he pronounces his oracles on the philosophical tripod. This centre contained the *élite* of the troops, that is, all those who labor upon that great Dictionary, *the suspension of which makes Europe groan*, including the compositors who printed it, the booksellers who sold it, and their clerks. . . . . The men of taste advance tranquilly and in very small numbers, without commanders, without plan, and even without auxiliary troops, trusting to the justice of their cause. Too blind confidence! The curtain rises; the signal is given; the philosophic army puts itself in motion; it makes the theatre resound with acclamations; the shock of hands agitates the air, and the earth trembles under the stamping of feet. . . . . At length, the feeble detachment of the people of taste was crushed by the superiority of numbers, and the barbarians found themselves masters of the field."

With more in a similar taste. It does not appear that Fréron was much injured by what he humorously styled "the *epigrams* of spider, viper, scoundrel, rascal, rogue," with which he was assailed in the play. He continued to conduct his "Année Littêraire" until his death in 1776, with only gradual abatement of prestige. Voltaire did not see anything comic in this "Account of a Great Battle." "I have just read it," he writes to Theophrastus (D'Argental). "The poor man is so wounded that he cannot laugh." The play, we are told, was often revived by the actors of the company to punish Fréron

for offensive criticism. If he presumed to censure with disagreeable severity Lekain, Clairon, Grandval, or some other important member of the troupe, the public were likely to be invited to a repetition of "L'Écossaise."

For several weeks of this summer of 1760, guardian angel D'Argental, who managed all Voltaire's dramatic business in Paris, had had the manuscript of the new tragedy of "Tancrède" in his possession, to be brought out at the moment he should deem most propitious. The production of "Les Philosophes" had clouded its prospects; but the great popularity of "L'Écossaise," not foreseen either by the author or his angel, seemed to prepare the way for its favorable reception. D'Argental, as Voltaire told him a hundred times, in his extravagant gratitude, was a consummate general in dramatic warfare. He resolved now upon a bold manœuvre.

The last performance of "L'Écossaise" occurred September 2d; and "Tancrède," the most complete contrast to that comedy which could be imagined, was produced on the following night. The scene of the comedy was a London tavern of that generation, where there was loud talk of stocks, politics, and merchandise, and where a portly merchant, fresh from a commercial voyage, came to the relief of suffering beauty with five hundred unromantic guineas. D'Argental waved his wand; the coffee-room vanished, and the scene was transferred to Sicily in the year of romance 1005. The rising of the curtain revealed a council-chamber, wherein was seen a considerable number of knightly personages, ranged in a semicircle, in consultation over the troubled fortunes of the state. Gone were the side-boxes that formerly narrowed the stage, and the crowd of dandies obstructing the entrances in the rear. For the first time on any stage the picturesque splendors of the feudal system were exhibited with an approach to their due effect, and the audience witnessed, with the pleasure that novelty excites, incidents of the tourney and the ordeal by arms, the gorgeous banners, the burnished armor, and all the showy trappings of ancient knighthood. This tragedy was a long step toward what is now so familiar to us all in the dramas of Goethe and Schiller, in the novels of Scott and his imitators. For the first time, too, there was space enough on the stage for the presentation of such a theme: a knightly

hero returning (like Ivanhoe) from long exile, and entering the lists, unknown, to bear away the palm of victory, and then to avenge the wrongs his country had done him by defeating her enemies. Lekain surpassed himself in the part of Tancrède, and Clairon, in the representation of the heroine, reached the highest point of her career as a histrionic artist. The author had given her lines and situations of almost unequaled capabilities, and she rose to them with a power that surprised her oldest admirers. Recent events had predisposed many auditors in favor of the piece, and the result was a triumph for author, for actors, and for guardian angel that surpassed their most sanguine hopes. The joyful news was promptly dispatched to the author by D'Argental.

"My divine angel," he replied, "you are the best general in Europe! You must have disposed your troops well to have gained this battle; for they say that the hostile army was considerable. *Debora*-Clairon has, then, conquered the enemies of the faithful. Satan, I hear, was in the amphitheatre, in the guise of Fréron, and a tear from a lady's eye having fallen upon the nose of the wretch, he said, '*Psh, psh*,' as if it had been holy water."

Fréron, too, displayed generalship on this occasion by reviewing the play in the calm, judicial tone, bestowing high praise upon it, and only very moderate censure. Indeed, the welcome seemed unanimous. Madame de Pompadour accepted the dedication of the play, and the king witnessed a performance of it in his theatre at Versailles. Voltaire's master, the Abbé d'Olivet, was lured from his retreat to the theatre by the general acclaim, and he protested that since the days of Roscius no such acting had been seen as that of Mademoiselle Clairon in this piece of his ancient pupil. "The day before yesterday," wrote D'Alembert to the author, "I saw 'Tancrède' for the third time. The whole audience was in tears, including myself, and criticism begins to be silent. Let the hostile writers have their say, and be sure that this piece will keep possession of the stage. Mademoiselle Clairon is incomparable in it, and beyond all her past efforts. Indeed, she well deserves from you some signal and enduring mark of gratitude. You know, moreover, that she is a philosopher, that she alone among her comrades declared openly against

the piece of Palissot, and that she greatly promoted the success of 'L'Écossaise,' though she did not play in it."

Voltaire acted upon this hint by composing his Epistles in verse to Mademoiselle Clairon, as well as by supporting with peculiar tact and ability her protest of the following year against the excommunication, *ex officio*, of all members of her profession. "Actors," he remarked, "are paid wages by the king, and excommunicated by the church; they are ordered by the king to play every evening, and forbidden to play at all by the ritual. If they do not play, they are put into prison; if they play, they are cast into the sewers. We delight to live with them, and object to be buried with them; we admit them to our tables, and close our cemeteries against them. It is necessary to confess that we are a very reasonable and a very consistent people." For sixty years, from the night when Adrienne Lecouvreur was buried at the crossing of two roads in the outskirts of Paris, he endeavored to rescue the actors from this opprobrium.

The dedication of this play to Madame de Pompadour was a bold act on the part of the author. Considering all the circumstances, it was not less proper than bold. In his dedication, as usual, he expatiated on the art he loved above all the other arts, and congratulated its friends on the late happy clearance of the stage, which enlarged the capabilities of the acted drama. "I know," said he, "that all the pomp of decoration is not worth one sublime verse, or one sentiment; just as personal adornment is nothing without beauty. I know well that it is not a great merit to speak to the eyes; but I dare assert that the sublime and the affecting move us more deeply when they are sustained by a suitable *appareil*, and that it is necessary to strike at once the soul and the eyes." This was well; but, in his personal address to the king's mistress, he made a slip of the pen that endangered his standing with the lady.

From the memoirs of Du Hausset, her *femme de chambre*, we learn that one of the amusements of the king in madame's boudoir was reading the anonymous letters sent by friend and foe. "No one can imagine," writes the *femme de chambre*, "how frequent they were." Some of them expressed bold, hard truths concerning public affairs; others were designed to

injure individuals. She gives a specimen letter to the king that "greatly affected him," in which the Encyclopædists were represented as "sapping the foundations of religion," and the Jansenists as "tending to republicanism;" the former attacking the trunk of the tree, and the latter its branches. These fell spirits, said the writer, aided by the political economists, such as Turgot, Morellet, and Mirabeau, would, in twenty years, undermine the government. Another of these letters, addressed to Madame de Pompadour, was as follows: —

"Madame, — M. de Voltaire has dedicated to you his tragedy of 'Tancrède.' This ought to have been a mark of homage, inspired by respect and gratitude. But it is an insult, and you will judge of it as the public does, if you read it with attention. You will see that this great writer feels, apparently, that the object of his eulogy is not worthy of it, and that he seeks to excuse himself in the eyes of the public. These are his terms: 'I have seen from your infancy graces and talents developing in you. I have received from you at every period of your life evidences of a bounty always equal. *If some censor could disapprove the homage which I render you, he could only be a person born with an ungrateful heart. I owe you much, madame, and I ought to say it.*' What, in reality, signify these phrases, if not that Voltaire feels it would be deemed extraordinary for him to dedicate his work to a woman whom the public judges not very estimable, but that the sentiment of gratitude ought to serve him as an excuse? Why does he suppose that this homage will find censors, when we see every day dedicatory epistles addressed to trifling persons [*caillettes*], or to women of a reprehensible life, without the least attention being paid to it?"

This letter, as Du Hausset reports, was discussed in the boudoir by the brother, the doctor, and the steward of madame, who agreed that the author of the epistle was very malign, and had no motive but to injure, but that, nevertheless, he was right. "From that moment," adds the *femme de chambre*, "Voltaire was lost in the mind of madame, as well as in the king's, though he could never divine the cause." There are allusions in the letters of Voltaire to something of this nature; but it appears that means were found to soothe the lady's wounded spirit. If he was in fault, the Duke of Choiseul must have shared the blame. Before printing the dedication, he sent a copy of it to that minister, who returned it with his approval, attested by the official seal. The anonymous critic,

however, had put his malevolent finger on the only slip of the kind which the swift and ceaseless pen of Voltaire ever appears to have made, and it evidently cost his friends some pains to remove the ill-impression it caused. That their success was complete was shown by the gift with which she acknowledged the compliment of the dedication. She sent the author her portrait, which adorned his house at Ferney as long as he lived.

Another incident of the publication of "Tancrède" is not less peculiar. For the cover of "L'Écossaise" the author had devised a picture of an ass braying at a lyre hanging to a tree. Under it he meant to print the name of Fréron. The editor, hearing betimes of this amiable project, announced in the "Année Littéraire" that the comedy of "L'Écossaise" was about to be published, adorned with a portrait of the author. Voltaire had just time to withdraw the caricature, and the comedy appeared without it. He was not the man to destroy such a picture. During the triumphant run of "Tancrède," Fréron's was the only voice that did not join in the applause which rewarded Mademoiselle Clairon's performance of the heroine. "Tancrède" was published early in 1761. Upon the cover the public were surprised to see the picture of an ass braying at a lyre, and under it these lines: —

"Que veut dire
Cette lyre?
C'est Melpomène ou Clairon.
Et ce monsieur qui soupire
Et fait rire,
N'est-ce pas Martin Fréron?"[1]

So passed the year 1760, one of the most active and eventful of Voltaire's life. He might well assure Madame du Deffand, this year, when she told him of a rumor of his death, which had run over Paris, "I have never been less dead than I am at present. I have not a moment free: bullocks, cows, sheep, meadows, buildings, gardens, occupy me in the morning; all the afternoon is for study; and after supper we rehearse the pieces which are played in my little theatre. This way of life gives desire to live; but I have more of that desire than ever,

[1] Who is designated by this lyre? Melpomene or Clairon. And this gentleman who sighs and makes us laugh, is it not Martin Fréron? (Les Ennemis de Voltaire, page 260.)

since you deign to interest yourself in me with so much bounty. You are right in so doing, for, at bottom, I am a good man."

Besides his rustic labors, he had given this year two five-act plays to the stage, written most of the second volume of his "Peter the Great," and pelted Pompignan with a terrible storm of particles.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ANOTHER SHOWER OF MONOSYLLABLES.

He was not yet done with the Pompignans. Edition after edition of the "Whens," the "Whos," the "Ifs," the "Buts," the "Noes," the "Yeses," and their companion pieces continued to be sold. By way of celebrating the triumph of the Abbé Morellet's contributions, Voltaire had the sixth edition of them printed at Geneva in red ink, copies of which still exist. In July, 1760, *some* enterprising person gathered all the particles in prose and verse, and published them in an octavo of two hundred and eighty-two pages, entitled "Collection of Parisian Facetiæ for the first Six Months of 1760." This volume had a great sale, and continued to be a familiar topic for many years in French-speaking capitals and courts. There has not been produced in modern times more exquisite fooling of the kind.

It is a relief, on turning to the object of all this burlesque, to discover that nature had kindly enveloped him in a comfortable panoply of conceit, which the storm of particles could not destroy. He would probably have been let alone after the publication of this volume, if he had not himself renewed the unequal combat.

In March, 1761, died the Dauphin's eldest son, aged nine years, to the great sorrow of the affectionate French people, who still loved their royal line. The diarists of the time relate the solemn pomp of the funeral, witnessed by tens of thousands of mourning people. The procession moved from the Tuileries at half past seven in the evening, and, on its course to St. Denis, halted before every church, while the priests and monks standing in the portal chanted a prayer. All classes of the people were represented in the procession, even the paupers, sixty of whom made part of the escort. The funeral car and its horses were profusely draped with white satin; white drapery and hangings prevailed everywhere; and every sol-

dier of the thousands in attendance, whether on foot or horseback, carried a torch. The death of this young prince was the more lamented because the Dauphin himself was not a healthy man, and he was known to be much under priestly influence.

Le Franc de Pompignan, in his character of historiographer of France, published the eulogium of the little prince, in which he had the brutal taste to renew his attack upon the literature and philosophy of the age. Voltaire was prompt to accept the defiance. Another shower of printed leaves came fluttering down upon Paris, and every one was soon reading "The Fors," a seven-page tract, addressed to M. le Franc de Pompignan.

"You do not cease to calumniate the nation: FOR, even in the eulogy of the late prince, the Duke of Burgundy, when the affair in hand was to dry our tears, you speak to the heir to the throne, to the afflicted father, to the affectionate and just prince, of nothing but the false and blind philosophy that reigns in France, of reason gone astray, of hearts corrupt, of hands suspected, of minds spoiled by dangerous opinions. You say that in this age death is regarded only as a return to nothingness.

"You are wrong: FOR it is cruel to say to the royal house that France is full of spirits who have little respect for the Catholic religion, and will have little for the throne; it is barbarous to describe men of letters as dangerous, nearly all of whom are without protection; it is frightful to play the part of a defamer, when you had set up in that of a consoler."

There were eight such paragraphs in "The Fors," all well punctuated. A few days after appeared "The Ah! Ahs!" a piece of the same murderous brevity, addressed to *Moses* le Franc de Pompignan: —

"AH! AH! Moses le Franc de Pompignan, you are, then, a plagiarist, and you made us believe that you were a genius!

"AH! AH! You have, then, pillaged Father Villermet, in your History of Monseigneur the Duke of Burgundy. You believed that the property of the Jesuits was already confiscated, and you hastened to possess yourself of their style!

"AH! AH! You gave yourself out for a *favorite*, whom the royal family *requested* to write the history of the princes of France. You led us into error by saying, in your dedicatory epistle to the Dauphin and Dauphiness, 'I obey your orders;' and it turns out that you only

used the permission they deigned to give you to dedicate to them your little translation, — a permission accorded to every one asking it.

"Ah! ah! Moses le Franc de Pompignan, you wished, then, to make all literature tremble! There was one day a braggart that gave some kicks to a poor devil, who received them with respect; but a brave fellow came up who kicked the braggart. Then the poor devil turned, and said to his assailant, '*Ah! ah!* monsieur, you did not tell me you were a poltroon;' and he kicked the braggart, in his turn, with which the neighborhood was marvelously content. Ah! Ah!"

These supplementary particles were followed by other satirical pieces; and, indeed, whenever Pompignan aired his pretensions, which he was likely to do on slight pretext, a new burlesque from the "manufactory of Ferney" might be expected. The season of 1763 was rich in such productions. There was a Narrative of the journey of Le Franc from Pompignan to Fontainebleau, as written by himself to his village solicitor, in the most ridiculous style of provincial bombast. There were some Letters of a Philadelphia Quaker to the Bishop of Puy, brother to the marquis, commenting upon the pastorals of the bishop in a strain of comic gravity. There was a Letter from the Secretary of M. de Voltaire to the Secretary of M. le Franc de Pompignan. Voltaire wrote a new Pompignan song to a familiar air, and sent both words and music to his friends, with an accompaniment for the guitar. He entitled this leaf, "Hymn sung at the Village of Pompignan."

"Nous avons vu ce beau village
De Pompignan,
Et ce marquis, brillant et sage,
Modeste et grand,
De ces vertus premier garant.
Et vive le roi, et Simon le Franc,
Son favori,
Son favori!"[1]

There were eight of these stanzas; they scarcely required music, for they sing themselves. The circulation of this song seems to have been the finishing stroke. The French people are the quickest in the world to catch such a refrain; and we are assured that the boys in the streets sang it *at* the Le

[1] We have seen this fine village of Pompignan, and this marquis, brilliant and wise, modest and grand, of his virtues first voucher. Live the king and Simon le Franc, his favorite, his favorite!

Francs as they passed. Wagnière records that there was a third brother Le Franc, an officer in the army, who wrote a letter to Voltaire, threatening him with personal chastisement if he did not let his brothers alone. Voltaire sent the letter to the Duke of Choiseul, with a note of his own; which latter did not remain in the minister's portfolio. It was "handed about" in Paris, as the custom was.

"I do not know, *Monsieur le Duc*, what I have done to these Messieurs le Franc. One of them flays my ears every day, and the other threatens to cut them off. I will take care of the rhymster; I abandon the bully to you; FOR I have need of my ears to hear what renown says of you."

The *bourgeois* marquis was seldom seen again in the circles whose suffrage he had rashly courted. To present readers of the mass of comicalities which he called forth the penalty he suffered may seem excessive; but it did not appear so to well-informed people of that day. Here is a conversation on the subject which occurred in the boudoir of Madame de Pompadour, between Dr. Quesnay, her physician, and Mirabeau, author of "L'Ami des Hommes," now better known as the father of the revolutionary orator. Quesnay was a good-tempered man of the world, a friend of the Encyclopædists, and prone to do them a good turn when he could. Mirabeau, a fanatic of *noblesse*, was esteemed, at a later day, a friend of the Le Francs; he was disposed to make light of the doctor's apprehensions.

MIRABEAU. — "I find the king not looking too well; he ages."

QUESNAY. — "So much the worse! A thousand times so much the worse! It would be the greatest loss for France, if he should die."

MIRABEAU. — "I do not doubt that you love the king, and with good reason; but I have never seen you so moved before."

QUESNAY. — "Ah! I am thinking of what would follow."

MIRABEAU. — "Why? The Dauphin is virtuous."

QUESNAY. — "Yes, and full of good intentions, and he has some *esprit;* but the bigots will have an absolute empire over a prince who regards them as oracles. The Jesuits will govern the state, as at the end of Louis XIV. The parliaments will be no better treated than my friends, the philosophers."

MIRABEAU. — "But the philosophers go too far, also. Why openly attack religion?"

QUESNAY. — "I agree with you; but how is it possible not to be in-

dignant at the fanaticism of the other party, and not to remember all the blood which has flowed during the last two hundred years?"

Mirabeau. — "Nevertheless, the Dauphin is virtuous, well-instructed, and not wanting in *esprit*."

Quesnay. — "It is the first part of his reign that I fear, when the imprudences of our friends will be exhibited to him with the greatest force; when the Jansenists and the Molinists will make common cause, and will be strongly supported by the Dauphiness. I had thought that M. du Muy [1] was a moderate man, who would temper the violence of the others; but I have heard him say that Voltaire deserved the last penalties of the law. Be sure, monsieur, that the times of John Huss, of Jérome of Prague, will return; but I hope I shall not live to see them. I much approve Voltaire in his hunting down the Pompignans. The *bourgeois* marquis, but for the ridicule with which he has been inundated, would have been preceptor to the royal princes of France; and, united to his brother George, he would have brought back the stake and the fagot."

Mirabeau. — "What ought to reassure you concerning the Dauphin is that, notwithstanding the devotion of Pompignan, the prince turns him into ridicule. Some time ago, having met him, and observing that he seemed swollen with pride, the Dauphin said to some one, who repeated it to me, —

'Et l'ami Pompignan pense être quelque chose!'"

Dr. Quesnay, in this conversation, expressed the apprehensions of the whole philosophic fraternity. In allusion to the "deluge of monosyllables," Voltaire wrote thus to his old friend Cideville: "I do not love war too well; in my life I have never attacked any one; but the insolence of those who dared persecute reason was carried too far. If Le Franc had not been covered with opprobrium, the custom of declaiming against the philosophers in the reception discourses at the Academy would have passed into a law, and we should have had a conflict every year. Again I say, I do not love war; but when we are compelled to make it, we must not fight softly."

He was also capable, in calmer moments, of doing justice to the merits both of Le Franc and Fréron. La Harpe mentions that at Ferney, one day, he read aloud to Voltaire, without naming the author, a passage from Le Franc's ode upon the Death of J. B. Rousseau, in which the detractors of that poet were compared to the dusky savages of the Upper Nile who

[1] Formerly under-governor of the Dauphin.

howl at the sun, while "the god of day, pursuing his career, pours torrents of light upon his obscure blasphemers." Voltaire cried, "Ah, mon Dieu! how fine that is! Who is the author?" "It is M. le Franc." "What! Le Franc de Pompignan?" "The self-same." "Let us see, then; repeat it." La Harpe read it a second time. "I do not take back what I said, — no, I do not; the passage is beautiful."

So, also, of Fréron. The Marquis de Prie records that, being at Ferney, he asked his host whom he should consult at Paris with regard to the merit of the new books. "Apply to that scoundrel of a Fréron," was the reply; "he is the only man who can do what you require." The marquis, who had witnessed the late conflict between them, could not conceal his astonishment. "On my faith, yes," continued Voltaire; "he is the only man who has taste. I am obliged to confess it, although I love him not, and have good reason for not loving him."

CHAPTER XXIX.

VOLTAIRE BUILDS A CHURCH AND ADOPTS A DAUGHTER.

We have not yet quite done with the activities of 1760. In August, during the first run of "L'Écossaise," and while the monosyllables were still singing in the air, it was noised abroad in Paris that Voltaire was building a church at Ferney. The lord of Ferney himself communicated this item of intelligence first to his guardian angels, the D'Argentals, August 3d: "Do you know what occupies me at present? Building a church at Ferney; I shall dedicate it to the angels. Send me your portrait and that of Madame Scaliger [Countess of Argental], that I may place them upon my great altar. I wish it to be known that I am building a church."

And a few days after to idle Thieriot: "I am building a church: it will not be St. Peter's at Rome; but the Lord hears everywhere the prayers of the faithful; he has no need of columns of porphyry or candelabras of gold. Yes, I am building a church: announce this consoling news to the children of Israel; let all the saints rejoice at it. The wicked will say, no doubt, that I am building this church in my parish in order to throw down the one which conceals a beautiful prospect, and to have a grand avenue; but I let the impious talk, and go on working out my salvation."

If the "wicked" made the remarks which he predicted they would, they spoke the truth. Close to his new house was the small, old, and ugly parish church of Ferney, with a dismal cemetery adjoining it, from which rose a tall, weather-stained, repulsive crucifix. Upon conferring with his builders, he found that the church could be taken down and rebuilt in a less inconvenient place, a few yards distant, for twelve thousand francs. He resolved to incur this expense; and, having obtained the requisite consent of his bishop, his curé, and his handful of villagers, he signed a contract for the execution of the work. The contract has been found; it runs thus: —

"This day, August 6, 1760, Master Guillot and Master Desplace have engaged to build the walls of the church and sacristy of the parish of Ferney, at the place which will be indicated by monsieur the curé; the church, nave and choir, to be of the same dimensions precisely as the church, nave and choir, now existing near the château, in order that the beams and rafters of the old building may serve for the new one. They will build the whole of the same height as the old church, and of the same stone, called *blocaille* or *blocage* [unhewn]; they will make the windows as near as may be of the same dimensions; they will use the portal which belongs to the old church, removing it from the place where it now is, and placing stanchions to support the said ancient portal, only taking care to cause the portal of the new church to project four inches. They will make two pilasters project four inches on each side of the portal, with a pediment of soft stone above the little portal. These four plain pilasters will be of brick, which they will cover with plaster, or with a good coat of whitewash. There will be no other ornaments. The whole to be done at the price of the walls of the château of Ferney; the hewn stone at the same price; and the said work, being complete, will be paid for in full on the 1st or 15th of October next, the day on which the said contractors engage to deliver the building to the carpenters for the roofing. Done at the château of Ferney, on the said August 6, 1760." [1]

Before the carpenters began their part of the work there was turmoil in Ferney, through the impetuosity of its lord. With his workmen about him, he proceeded to the demolition of the church, with little more ceremony than if it had been (what it looked like) an old barn. The walls of the cemetery were swiftly leveled. The church was dismantled; it was even half tumbled into ruin, while the sacrament was still in its place on the altar. "Take away that gibbet!" the master was reported to have said, pointing to the crucifix outside of the church. He went too fast; some consideration is due to whatever virtuous human beings, age after age, have hallowed by their veneration. Moreover, he was supposed to have broken the law.

The curé of Moëns, a parish adjoining Ferney, who had had litigation with Voltaire, and cherished resentment against him, saw his opportunity of revenge, and hastened to improve it. It is the faithful and too modest secretary, Wagnière, who tells this story, and explains the cause of the priest's animos-

[1] Ménage et Finances de Voltaire, par L. Nigolardot. Paris, 1854. Page 158.

ity. The curé of Moëns, it appears, like most of the remoter parish priests of that age, was policeman, justice, squire, and priest, all in one, and ruled his villagers, in the absence of the seigneur, with a high hand. Voltaire had already defended his own parishioners against the tyranny of this priest. One day, in 1759, a young man was brought to his château, bruised and bleeding from many wounds, and, apparently, half dead. Wagnière explains: —

"The curé of Moëns, having learned that three young men, on their return from hunting, were supping with a widow of respectable family in a hamlet of his parish, half a league from his residence, took four strong and robust peasants, armed with thick sticks, himself also carrying one, led them over the snow on a winter evening at nine o'clock to the widow's house, and beat them to insensibility, though they asked for quarter. One of them lay long at death's door. M. de Voltaire, to whose house he was brought, interested himself earnestly in getting justice done this unfortunate young man. The affair was compromised at length, and it cost the curé a good deal of money. He never pardoned this interference, and now he believed the moment favorable for his revenge. . . . . He induced the curé of Ferney to remove the sacrament into his church, persuading him, as well as the inhabitants of Ferney, that M. de Voltaire had profaned theirs. He pretended, also, that M. de Voltaire had said, in the presence of a very devout seamstress, speaking of the cemetery cross, '*Take that gibbet* [*potence*] *away.*' In fact, the curé of Ferney, terrified, with tears in his eyes, followed by his parishioners, also in tears, went in procession to carry the holy sacrament to the church at Moëns. The curé of Moëns then denounced M. de Voltaire, before the ecclesiastical judge [*official*] of the county of Gex, as guilty of impiety and sacrilege. The whole apparatus of justice, secular and ecclesiastical, was arrayed against Ferney. A criminal suit of the most violent character was begun against the lord of the place, and those gentlemen indulged the confident hope that M. de Voltaire would be burned, or at least hanged, for the greater glory of God and the edification of the faithful. This they said even publicly."

The affair was indeed serious, and it cost him much trouble to baffle the irate pastors. His workmen were brought to a stand by formal interdict, and scattered to their homes in alarm. The work was suspended for several weeks; he was obliged to remove the altar, the bells, the confessionals, and the fonts three miles away, that his villagers might attend mass

during the interval. Meanwhile, there was much sending to Paris for ecclesiastical law books and works upon church history; there was also vigilant search in the same for precedents; there was voluminous correspondence with a learned advocate of Lyons; there were subtle disquisitions as to how far a church may be demolished without ceasing to be a church; there were cross-questionings of workmen to ascertain whether M. de Voltaire had called the crucifix a gibbet or a post, a *potence* or a *poteau*; there were counter-suits brought by the lord of Ferney against the curés for illegal assumptions of authority; there were communings on the question whether the bishop could or could not be compelled to rebless the rebuilt church; and, if not, then what? Would it not in that case be a Protestant temple?

He struck terror to the accusing priests by producing a royal ordinance of 1627, forbidding a curé to serve either as prosecutor or judge in such cases. They had broken this ordinance, and he threatened to come upon them for damages to the extent of his whole loss. In a word, he led these ecclesiastics such a dance up and down the ordinances and precedents, the accumulation of ages, that they were glad to be allowed quietly to drop the prosecution, and permit him to complete the church according to his original plan. "Bishop, judge, prosecutor, Jesuit," he wrote in June, 1761, "I have beaten them all; and I am building my church as I wish, and not as they wished."

Nor was this the end of his victory over them. He loved to signalize and decorate a triumph. He shall relate here this wonderful tale himself, as he related it to D'Argental, when that guardian spirit remonstrated against his wasting upon such trifles as these time which might have enriched the national theatre with another drama: —

"My destiny is to scoff at Rome and make her serve my little purposes. The adventure of 'Mahomet' encouraged me. I am making, then, a pleasant request to the holy father: I ask of him some relics for my church, an absolute domain in my cemetery, an indulgence *in articulo mortis*, and for my lifetime a beautiful bull for myself alone, giving permission to cultivate the soil on *fête* days without being damned. My bishop is a fool [*sot*] who was unwilling to grant the unfortu-

nate land of Gex the permission I ask, and this abominable custom of getting drunk in honor of the saints, instead of working, still prevails in many dioceses."

These modest requests went their way to Rome. Meanwhile, the church being finished, and there being then, as he remarked, no church in France dedicated to God, he inscribed on it, DEO SOLO (to God alone), — an inscription which he afterwards changed to the one it now bears: DEO EREXIT VOLTAIRE. The edifice was duly reblessed. The crucifix, once so unpleasing an object, was redecorated, made "as splendid as a Roman emperor," and set up inside the church. On Sundays the lord of Ferney sometimes went to mass, when he was duly incensed; such an honor appertaining to feudal *seigneurie*.

His petition to the Pope, being supported by the Duke of Choiseul and the French ambassador, was granted in part. On the same day in October, 1761, two interesting objects reached the château of Ferney. One was the portrait of Madame de Pompadour, given by the marquise herself to the author of "Tancrède," in acknowledgment of the dedication of the tragedy. The other was a relic, sent by the Pope, in compliance with Voltaire's request, for the new church of Ferney. This relic was a small piece of the hair-shirt (*cilice*) of St. Francis. "Thus, you see," he wrote to a friend of Madame de Pompadour, "I am very well, both for this world and for the other." He was much amused by the arrival of the relic on the same day as the portrait, and did not fail to let Paris know the coincidence. It was a notification to persons and powers concerned that M. de Voltaire, after forty years of exertion, had conquered the liberty of saying and doing very nearly all he pleased.

Yet, not *quite* all, as his next exploit showed. Indeed, this happy termination of the controversy occurred none too soon; for a new inmate was coming to Ferney, who could scarcely have remained there if the master of the château had been in open feud with the priests of the neighborhood.

The polite people of Paris were much interested at this time in the family of a nephew of the illustrious Corneille, author of the "Cid," and the "father" thereby of French tragedy. This family having been reduced by a series of misfortunes to

destitution, Fréron, in his "Année Littéraire," proposed that one of Corneille's dramas should be performed at the Théâtre-Français for their benefit. The company, with the usual generosity of their profession, entered warmly into the scheme, and were so well seconded by the public that the proceeds amounted to five thousand five hundred francs. Old debts absorbed the greater part of the money, and soon the Corneilles saw the wolf again very close to their door, — parents and children, of whom the eldest was a daughter past seventeen.

Friends in Paris called Voltaire's attention to the family, and spoke highly of Marie as a young lady of pleasing appearance and excellent disposition, who only needed education to be everything heart could wish. It occurred to him to give her as a companion to his niece, and to assume the charge of her education and establishment. With assistance, she wrote a letter to Voltaire, which greatly pleased him; and, indeed, she had inherited a tincture of the family talent. The letter reached him in November, 1760, while his church was still in ruins, and his priests were in full cry after him. In his reply, he was not unmindful of these circumstances, nor of their possible effect upon a father and mother who were dependent upon charity.

"Your name, mademoiselle, your merit, and the letter with which you honor me augment in Madame Denis and myself the desire to receive you, and to deserve the preference which you are pleased to give us. I ought to say to you that we pass several months of the year in a country neighborhood (Les Délices) near Geneva; but you will have all possible facilities and aids for the duties of religion. Moreover, our principal abode is in France, a league from there, in a very tolerable château, which I have recently built, and in which you will be much more commodiously lodged than in the house where I have the honor to write to you. In both houses you will find the means of occupation, as well in such of the lighter labors of the hand as you may prefer as in music and study."

He sent orders to his notary in Paris to supply the needful money, and in December, 1760, she came to Les Délices, where he was passing the winter. "We find her," he wrote, a few days after, to D'Argental, "natural, cheerful, sincere. She has the plump face of a puppy, most beautiful eyes, a most

beautiful complexion, a large mouth sufficiently alluring, with two rows of pearls." They were both surprised at her ignorance. She had learned by herself to read and write a little; and Voltaire began at once, the very week of her arrival, to give her a daily lesson in both. In a few days, he began to look about for a tutor; he was resolved to afford her all the advantages which she could have had if she had been a young lady of rank. "I am a soldier," he would say; "it becomes me to take care of the daughter of my general." In a month he was enraptured with her amiable character and engaging demeanor.

"Her heart [he wrote, January 15, 1761] appears excellent, and we have every reason to hope that, if we do not make a learned woman of her, she will become a very amiable person, who will have all the virtues, the graces, and the good-nature which make the charm of society. What pleases me in her above all things is her attachment to her father, and her gratitude to all the persons to whom she is under obligation. She has been a little sick. You can judge if Madame Denis has taken care of her! She is very well attended to; a *femme de chambre* has been assigned her, who is enchanted to be near her. All the servants love her; each of them contends for the honor of executing her little commissions, which assuredly are not difficult. We have discontinued our lessons, while a violent cold compels her to a strict regimen and rest from all labor. She begins to mend. We are about to resume our lessons in spelling. Our first care must be to enable her to speak her native tongue with simplicity and nobleness. We make her write every day; she sends me daily a little note, which I correct, and she gives me an account of what she has read. It is not yet time to give her masters; so far, she has none except my niece and myself. We do not let pass either incorrect expressions or vicious pronunciations; custom makes all easy. We do not forget the little labors of the hand. There are hours for study and hours for embroidery. I ought not to omit that I accompany her myself to the mass of the parish. We owe the example, and we give it."

A few days after, to D'Argental: "I have terrible affairs on my hands; . . . . but my most difficult task is to teach grammar to Mademoiselle Corneille, who has no disposition to that sublime science."

She appears, however, to have made good progress in composition. He gave her the pen, one day, in the first month of her residence, as he was finishing a letter to D'Argental, and

she wrote, "M. de Voltaire calls M. and Madame d'Argental his angels. I have discovered that they are mine also. Will they permit me to present to them my tender gratitude? Corneille." To which he added, "*Eh, bien!* It seems to me that Chimène[1] begins to write a little less on the diagonal. My angels, we kiss the end of your wings, Denis, Corneille, and V."

Thus was he tasting, at length, some of the delights of paternity, which, had he lived in another time or land, he might have enjoyed in full measure long before, and been now surrounded by worthy sons and daughters, the richest recompense of honorable living. Like a veritable French father, he went with this new daughter to mass, and he took care that her father and her father's friends should know it. Events soon proved that this was a necessary precaution. Here was a lamb lost from the fold, and gone to live in the very den of the wolf, to be devoured at his leisure. She had spent a short time recently at a convent-school in Paris, and it was from that convent that she went to the château of Voltaire! There was much remark upon this circumstance in the pious circles of the metropolis; Jansenists and Molinists could sincerely unite in deploring it. A Jesuit priest, one Abbé de la Tour-du-Pin, a relation of the Corneilles, urgently solicited a *lettre de cachet*, to enable him to "ravish her from the asylum" which had been given her. "What would have become of the poor child," wrote Voltaire, "if she had had no other protector than this bad relation?" Fréron, in the "Année Littéraire," gave expression to the feelings of the religious circles by paragraphs that were ingeniously malign.

"You would scarcely believe," said he, "the noise which this generosity of M. de Voltaire makes in the world. It is spoken of in the gazettes, in the journals, in all the public papers; and I am persuaded that those pompous announcements are giving much pain to that modest poet, who knows that the principal merit of laudable actions is to keep them secret. It seems, besides, from this *éclat*, that M. de Voltaire is not accustomed to give such proofs of his goodness of heart, and that it is the most extraordinary thing in the world to see him cast a look of sensibility upon a young unfortunate. But,

[1] Chimène is the name of the heroine in the Cid of Corneille.

a year ago, he did the same thing to a Sieur de l'Écluse, formerly an actor at the Opera-Comique, whom he lodges, maintains, and, in a word, treats like a brother. We must own that, on leaving her convent, Mademoiselle Corneille has fallen into good hands."

Continuing his attacks, he said, in another number of his journal, that "the father of the young lady was a kind of little clerk of a two-penny post, at fifty francs a month wages, and that his daughter had left a convent to receive at the house of M. de Voltaire her education from a circus-clown."

When men use such missiles as these in personal contention, it often happens that the anguish of the dastardly blow is borne by innocent women, unseen and silent. These paragraphs lost the young lady a husband; perhaps saved her from a bad one. A young gentleman of the neighborhood, in March, 1761, when she had been but three months domesticated at Les Délices, asked her hand in marriage; but, upon reading such paragraphs in the "Année Littéraire," his pride of *noblesse* took the alarm; he grew cold and distant, and finally relinquished her. The insinuations, moreover, were groundless. L'Écluse, once an excellent actor, was then a dentist, established at Geneva, and not an inmate of Voltaire's house, except when his professional services were required there. A modest employment had indeed been found for M. Corneille, but it was legitimate and respectable.

Upon hearing of these libels, Voltaire sent for the numbers containing them. He was roused to the last degree of indignation, and exerted all the influence he could command to get justice done his ward. He failed, because Fréron was "protected" by the timid minister, Malesherbes. "If a gentleman in *ac*," he wrote, "coming from Gascogne, saw his daughter insulted in the pages of Fréron, if it should be said of her that she was educated by a circus-clown, he would ask satisfaction for the affront, and he would get it." But Marie Corneille was only the descendant of an author educated by an author. "Such is the way of thinking, proud and base at once, of the light citizens of Paris!"

He proceeded on this occasion in his usual method, which was, first, to demand justice from the appointed ministers of justice; and, after denial, to use the means that nature and

circumstances gave him. He took revenge upon Fréron by epigram and burlesque; he did justice to Mademoiselle Corneille by providing for her such a dowry as gave her a choice among many suitors. I will copy only one of the Fréron epigrams here. A certain Abbé la Coste, a noted bigamist, died in the Toulon galleys, to which he had been condemned. The following stanza was set afloat in Paris: —

"La Coste est mort. Il vaque dans Toulon
Par cette perte un emploi d'importance.
La bénéfice exige residence,
Et tout Paris vient d'y nommer Fréron." [1]

Many men could have written this epigram, but only Voltaire could have provided Marie Corneille with the dowry of revenue and celebrity which he set about securing for her. With the consent of the French Academy, he issued proposals for the publication by subscription of an edition of the works of Pierre Corneille, in several volumes, to be edited and annotated by himself; the whole profit of the edition to be invested for the dramatist's grand-niece. Never was such a scheme more ably managed, or more successful. All the potentates and powers of Europe seemed to contend which should respond to the editor's proposals with the most alacrity and munificence. The King of France subscribed for two hundred copies, at forty francs each; the Empress of Russia for two hundred; the Emperor and Empress of Austria for one hundred each; Madame de Pompadour for fifty. This is merely another way of stating that the court and nobility of France, Austria, and Russia subscribed liberally. Voltaire himself, besides advancing the preliminary expenses, besides laboriously annotating the thirty-three plays, and conducting every detail of the enterprise, subscribed himself for a hundred copies. As a specimen of his method, I may give his application to William Pitt, then at the summit of his ministerial career, the pride of his own country, and the terror of her enemies. Voltaire wrote to him in English, July 19, 1761, from Ferney: —

"Monsieur, — While you weigh the interests of England and France, your great mind may at one time reconcile Corneille

[1] La Coste is dead. There is vacant in Toulon by this loss a place of importance. The benefice requires residence, and all Paris nominates for it Fréron.

with Shakspeare. Your name at the head of subscribers shall be the greatest honor the letters can receive; 't is worthy of the greatest ministers to protect the greatest writers. I dare not ask the name of the king; but I am assuming enough to desire earnestly so great a favor.

"Je suis avec un respect infini pour votre personne et pour vos grandes actions, monsieur, votre très-humble et très-obéissant serviteur, VOLTAIRE,

"Gentilhomme Ordinaire de la Chambre du Roi."

Mr. Pitt replied, September 9, 1761, from St. James's Square, London: —

"The pressure of business is but a feeble reason for having deferred answering the honor of a letter from M. de Voltaire, and on so interesting a subject. For who so insensible to the true spirit of poetry as not to admire the works and respect the posterity of the great Corneille? Or what more flattering than to second, in any manner, those pious cares offered to the manes of the founder of French tragedy by the genius who was reserved to perfect it? I feel the high value of the favorable sentiments you are so good as to express on any subject, and am happy in this occasion of assuring you of the distinguished consideration with which I have the honor to be, etc., W. PITT."

There was a considerable subscription in England, to follow the most illustrious English name. Many royal and princely persons paid for their copies in advance; so that, as early as May, 1761, before a volume was ready, he had invested for his ward money enough to produce an annual revenue of fifteen hundred francs; and this was but the beginning. "You will see," he wrote exultingly to her friend, M. le Brun, "that she will end by keeping a good house." Besides: "She is more amiable than ever; every one loves her disposition, — gay, gentle, uniform, — and she plays comedy very prettily."

The great task, thus lightly undertaken, was performed with laborious assiduity and thoroughness. Next to his "Annals of the Empire," it was the most tedious and worrying task of his life. "I am reproached," he wrote to Madame du Deffand, after it was done, "with having been too severe; but I desired to be useful, and I was often very discreet. The prodigious number of faults against the language, against clear-

ness of ideas and expressions, against the proprieties, and, finally, against the interest, so terrified me that I did not say half of what I might have said. This toil was exceedingly ungrateful and disagreeable; but it served to marry two girls, — a thing that never before happened to a commentator, and never will again." Indeed, he did the work so well that his commentary upon Corneille remains to this day one of the text-books prized by students of the French language and drama. The edition was completed in 1764, in twelve volumes octavo, and was reprinted, a few years after, in eight volumes. The commentary was also published in 1764 by itself in two volumes, and has been since often reprinted.

The young lady had thus become a prize for the competition of eligible young gentlemen; for her *dot* was something handsome. Beside the fifteen hundred francs per annum, there were forty thousand francs of subscriptions due, on the completion of the work; and Voltaire settled upon her as a gift a small estate, valued at twenty thousand francs. Suitors could not be wanting. Adventurers appeared, who possessed nothing more precious than debts and bad habits. At length, the right man presented himself: a near neighbor, "a cornet of French dragoons, young, gentle, brave, of a good figure, and possessing ten thousand francs a year." Dupuits was the name of this fortunate young man. The wedding occurred in February, 1763, to the great content of all concerned; and it is pleasing to observe the exactitude with which Voltaire fulfilled the proprieties of the occasion. He sent the parents of the bride a present of twenty-five louis; he gave them also a formal invitation to the wedding; but he implored the D'Argentals to dole the money out to them in small sums.

"They say," he explained, "that the first thing the father will do when he gets some money will be to come quick to Ferney. God preserve us from it! We throw ourselves at the wings of our angels, that they may prevent him from being at the marriage. His appearance, his language, his employment, would not succeed with the family into which Mademoiselle Corneille is about to enter. The Duke of Villars and the other Frenchmen who will be at the ceremony would make some bad jokes. If I consulted only myself, I should assuredly have no repugnance; but all the world is not as philosophical

as your humble servant; and, patriarchally speaking, I should be very glad to have the father and mother witnesses of their daughter's happiness."

All went well, and the marriage appears to have been successful in every respect. He did not lose his ward by giving her away; for the married pair continued to reside under his roof, and there their children were born. He might well exclaim, as he did, when the commentary was complete, "I thank God I have fulfilled all the obligations I undertook!" although, as he elsewhere remarks, he had "sweat blood and water" in doing it.

It was long before he was done with the family; for other Corneilles emerged to view, in hopes of similar fortune. "We are menaced," he wrote in 1763, "with a dozen more little Corneilles;" and, indeed, a veritable grandson of Pierre, in a direct line, came to see him. In the same year, a young man claimed free admission to the Théâtre-Français, on the ground that he was a descendant of the family of Racine. The request was refused without ceremony.

The presence of Marie Corneille consoled him for the tedious labor of commenting; for she added to his home an element necessary to its completeness. "Our child," he writes to one of the "brethren" in 1765, — "our child, Madame Dupuits, has just given birth at seven months to a boy, who died at the end of two hours. He was, fortunately, baptized; it is a great consolation. Adieu, my dear crusher of *l'Infâme* (*écr. de l'inf.*)." In due time a daughter was born, in whom he discovered "singular talents."

Besides Racines and Corneilles, other forlorn bearers of distinguished names besought him to efface the discrepancy between their lineage and their lot; and it required all his tact to parry or divert some of these solicitations. The late Madame George Sand cherished two interesting letters of this period, which connect it with the present time. In communicating these letters to the collector who gave them to the public, she wrote, "My grandmother, Aurora de Saxe, Countess of Horn, found herself reduced to a little pension from the Dauphiness; and even that suddenly failed her, one fine day. On this occasion she wrote to Voltaire, who replied to her in a charming letter, of which she availed herself with the Duchess

of Choiseul." The letter of the Countess of Horn, dated August 24, 1768, was as follows: —

"It is to the singer of Fontenoy that the daughter of Marshal Saxe addresses herself, in order to obtain bread. I was recognized; Madame the Dauphiness took care of my education after my father's death. That princess withdrew me from the convent of Saint-Cyr to marry me to M. de Horn, chevalier of the order of Saint-Louis, and captain in the Royal-Bavarian regiment. For my dowry she obtained his promotion as king's lieutenant at Schelestadte. My husband, on arriving at that place, in the midst of the *fêtes* given us there, suddenly died. Since then, death has taken away my protectors, the Dauphin and Dauphiness. Fontenoy, Rancoux, Lawfelt, are forgotten. I am abandoned. I have thought that he who has immortalized the victories of the father would be interested in the misfortunes of the daughter. To him it belongs to adopt the children of heroes, and to be my support, as he is that of the daughter of the great Corneille. With that eloquence which you have consecrated to plead the cause of the unfortunate you will cause to resound in all hearts the cry of pity, and you will acquire as much claim to my gratitude as you already have to my respect and to my admiration for your sublime talents."

To this letter Voltaire replied in a way to accomplish the purpose without further expense to himself: —

"Madame, I shall go very soon to rejoin the hero, your father, and I shall inform him with indignation of the condition in which his daughter now is. I had the honor to live much with him; he deigned to have much favorable regard for me. It is one of the misfortunes which overwhelm me in my old age to see that the daughter of the hero of France is not happy in France. If I were in your place, I would go and present myself to the Duchess of Choiseul; for then your name would cause both leaves of her door to open, and the duchess, whose soul is just, noble, and beneficent, would not let such an opportunity of doing good pass unimproved. This is the best advice I can give you, and I am sure you will succeed when you speak to her. Doubtless, you did me too much honor when you thought that a sick old man, persecuted, and withdrawn from the world, could be so happy as to serve the daughter of Marshal Saxe. But you have done me justice in not doubting the lively interest I take in the daughter of so great a man." [1]

[1] Lettres Inédites de Voltaire. Par M. de Cayrol. Paris, 1857. Vol. ii. page 146.

This letter, as it appears, had its designed effect in procuring relief to the lady. The Countess de Horn married a farmer-general soon after, and was thus enabled to rear her granddaughter in the château of Nohant, which supplied the novelist with so many available reminiscences.

But this is far from the château of Ferney, to which we now return. Voltaire's little church was finished; the hideous old cemetery was rearranged; the park and gardens were laid out; the great barn, the bee-hives, the silk-house, were in operation. Seeing in Ferney his final home, he withdrew more and more from Les Délices, and "amused himself" by building a tomb partly within his church, for the resting-place of his bones. "Two little boys," he remarked, "could carry me to the grave;" but it was not the less necessary to have one; and he was resolved that the lord of Ferney should not be buried in the manner of Adrienne Lecouvreur. He was measured for a tomb, and hoped to get safely into it without asking permission of curé or bishop. He had a singular abhorrence of the ceremonial which the church appointed for the dying. Many passages like the following occur in the letters of these later years: —

To Frederic II. of Prussia: "I do not fear death, which approaches me with long strides, and has already possessed himself of my eyes, my teeth, and my ears; but I have an invincible aversion to the manner in which we die in our holy religion, catholic, apostolic, and Roman. It seems to me extremely ridiculous to get ourselves oiled to go into the other world, as we grease the springs of our carriage for a journey. This folly and all that follows, is so repugnant to me that I am tempted to get myself carried to Neuchâtel to have the pleasure of dying in your house; it had been sweeter to live in it."

To his old friend, Madame du Deffand, he expressed himself very fully on the question, Is life worth living? Her own opinion on the point, as readers are aware, was positive enough. "For my part, monsieur," she once wrote to him, "I avow it, I have but one fixed thought, one sentiment, one chagrin, one misfortune: it is the misery of having been born. There is no part that can be played upon the theatre of the world which I should prefer to non-existence; and yet (what

will seem to you inconsistent), though I were perfectly certain of being about to return to nothingness, I should not have the less horror of death. Explain me to myself." [1] She often discoursed in this strain. He replied, May 9, 1764: —

"I agree with you that life is very short and sufficiently unhappy; but I must tell you that I have in my house a relation, twenty-three years of age, handsome, well made, vigorous, and this is what happened to him: he fell from his horse one day in hunting, and cut his thigh a little. . . . . A trifling incision was made; and there he was, paralyzed for the rest of his days; not paralyzed in a part of his body, but so paralyzed as not to be able to use any of his members, not to lift his head, with the absolute certainty that he could never get the least relief. He has accustomed himself to his condition, and loves life to folly. It is not that annihilation has not something good in it; but I believe it impossible truly to love annihilation, notwithstanding its good qualities. As to death, let us reason a little, I pray you. It is very certain that death is not felt at all; it is not painful for a moment; it is as like sleep as two drops of water. It is only the idea that we shall never wake again which gives us pain; it is the apparatus of death which is horrible,— the barbarity of extreme unction, the cruelty of notifying us that for us all is over. Of what good is it to us to pronounce our sentence? That sentence will be well executed without the notary and the priests taking any trouble about it. It is necessary for us to make our arrangements in good time, and then never to think of it again.'

"'They say sometimes of a man, 'He died like a dog.' But truly a dog is very happy to die without all that ceremony with which they persecute the last moments of our lives. If they had a little charity for us, they would let us die without saying anything to us about it. The worst is that we are then surrounded by hypocrites, who worry us to make us think as they do not in the least think; or else by imbeciles, who wish that we should be as stupid as they are. All that is very disgusting. The only pleasure of life at Geneva is that people can die there as they like; many worthy persons summon no priests at all. People kill themselves if they please, without any one objecting; or, they await the last moment, and no one troubles them about it."

In this tone he invariably spoke of life and death: he enjoyed life; he never had the slightest fear of death. In showing visitors about his estate, he would point to his church and tomb with evident complacency. An anonymous "letter from

[1] 2 Lettres de Madame du Deffand, 462. Paris, 1864.

Ferney" gives part of a conversation that occurred between him and some travelers, as they stood looking at the golden letters of the inscription: DEO EREXIT VOLTAIRE. "That is a fine word between two great names," said one; "but is it the proper term? Should it not have been *dicavit* or *sacravit?*" "No, no!" cried Voltaire, who explained the significance of the word chosen. He then showed his tomb protruding from the wall of the little church. "The wicked will say," he continued, "that I am neither inside nor outside."

CHAPTER XXX.

THE CALAS TRAGEDY.

HITHERTO the enterprise of crushing *l'Infâme* had been conducted in a sportive manner, which appears to have been as amusing to the sportsman as to the spectators. In the events now claiming our attention there was no ingredient of the amusing. We are now to see *l'Infâme*, not ridiculous, but terrific; not uttering foolish words, but doing hideous things.

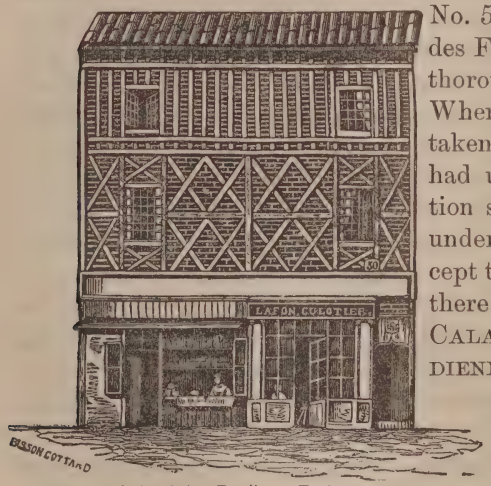
In the south of France, within sight of the Pyrenees, and not far from midway between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, is the ancient city of Toulouse, capital of the province of Languedoc, and the seventh city of the kingdom in wealth and importance. It is the chief town of that part of France in which "the famous village of Pompignan" is situated, and where the château of the Le Francs is still shown to curious strangers. Toulouse was one of the most provincial places in Europe; a truly *pagan* city, using that word in its original sense of non-metropolitan. In that age of the Encyclopædia and the Encyclopædists, Toulouse still valued itself upon possessing a wondrous store of "relics," among which were the bodies of seven apostles, the bones of many of the infants slain by Herod, part of the robe of the Virgin Mary, and divers skulls and skeletons of ancient bishops. In Toulouse, such events as the expulsion of the Huguenots and the massacre of St. Bartholomew's day were celebrated every year as occasions of joy and triumph. The news of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes was received there with enthusiasm, and commemorated at the public expense by two frescoes: one representing Louis XIV. holding a cross in his left hand and a drawn sword in his right, with soldiers behind him, forcing Protestants to kneel to images; the other picturing the massacre of St. Bartholomew, in which mothers and children were seen murdered by soldiers, to whom they lifted imploring arms and agonized faces.

The anniversary of the St. Bartholomew massacre was celebrated as a two days' festival, by processions and solemn services of thanksgiving; the festival having been established by municipal law, and sanctioned by a papal bull. In 1762, the two hundredth anniversary of the massacre, the event was commemorated with unexampled pomp and expense; all ranks and professions participating. The magistrates marched in the procession, wearing robes of silk and gold, made at Lyons for the purpose; Le Franc de Pompignan probably among them, for he had long been a counselor of honor to the Toulouse parliament. It was a ghastly and horrible show. The cobblers' guild carried the head of the first bishop of the city; the roofers bore some of the Herod infants' bones; and every trade had its dirty relics, — so many that there were, it was computed, thirty skeletons carried in all; fit emblem of the murderous deeds committed two centuries before! There were companies of White Penitents, Black Penitents, Gray Penitents; all the orders and grades of the priesthood; knights, nobles, people, — all intent upon showing themselves, by this solemn act, "worthy of their pious ancestors." Worst of all, nearly the whole movable population of the city and its vicinity looked on this shameful procession in admiring sympathy.

There were still a few Protestant families in Toulouse, living there on sufferance, excluded from the more desirable callings. A Protestant could not be a lawyer of any grade, nor hold the smallest municipal office. He could not be a physician, surgeon, printer, bookseller, goldsmith, grocer, or apothecary. A Protestant family could not keep a Protestant servant, and a Protestant business man could not keep a Protestant clerk. A woman, in 1748, was fined three thousand francs for serving as a midwife without having first joined the Roman Catholic communion.[1] The people of the city cherished against the Protestants the antipathy which is so natural to bigoted ignorance; and every time they walked abroad they were reminded by public works of art that the slaughter of Protestants was a pious and holy work. It was but natural that they should attribute to Protestants the same inhuman feelings. The ignorant people of Toulouse believed that

[1] Jean Calas et sa Famille, par A. Coquerel, fils. Paris, 1858. Page 51.

it was a fixed principle with Protestants to put to death by secret assassination any of their number who should turn Catholic. The assassin, they thought, was chosen in the conclave of the sect, and he was bound, on pain of being killed himself, to execute its bloody decree. An idea of this kind is so congenial to fanatic credulity that we find it often prevailing where there is a small superior class in the midst of a benighted population. Jews, freemasons, Protestants, philosophers, democrats, socialists, have been the occasion of such a belief at different periods and in different countries. M. Coquerel assures us that the belief prevails to-day in Toulouse; and the reason why it prevails, he thinks, is because it is so exquisitely absurd.



House of the Calas Family at Toulouse, 1762.[1]

This is the picture of a house in Toulouse, still standing, No. 50, in La Grand Rue des Filatiers, the principal thoroughfare of the city. When this picture was taken, in 1835, the house had undergone no alteration since the period now under consideration, except that on the sign-board there was then, "JEAN CALAS, MARCHAND D' INDIENNES;" or, as we should say, dealer in dry goods. Jean Calas was one of the few Protestants of Toulouse, where he had been established in business for forty years, and ever maintained an irreproachable character. In 1761 he was sixty-three years of age; a singularly placid, kindly, tolerant, prudent man, not of extraordinary abilities, but one of the gentlest and worthiest of human beings; firmly attached to the reformed church, without the slightest tincture of ill-will toward his Catholic fellow-citizens. His business was not extensive, his whole capital amounting to eighty thousand francs; but he had reared respectably a fam-

[1] From Jean Calas et sa Famille, par A. Coquerel, fils. Paris, 1858.

ily of four sons and two daughters, of whom the youngest was a lad fifteen years of age. His wife was superior to himself in vivacity of mind, and her family had remote connections with the ancient nobility of the province. One of the sons had been converted to the Roman Catholic religion some time before. The old man, so far from resenting this, heartily conceded his son's right and sole responsibility in the matter. He was even more liberal to that son than to the rest of his children. He was known to his friends and neighbors as a man free from the intolerant spirit.

The day of doom for this family was October 13, 1761. All had gone as usual in the shop and in the home above it until the evening. The labors of the day were done; the shop was shut; the supper-time of the family was approaching. Several members of the household were absent from home. Louis, the Roman Catholic son, a Toulouse apprentice, was at his master's house, in another street. Donat, the youngest son, was an apprentice at Nismes. The two daughters were at a neighboring village, where they were accustomed to pass a part of every fine season. There were in the house, that evening, the father, aged sixty-three years, and somewhat infirm for his age; the mother, a vigorous and efficient woman of forty-five; a Catholic servant, Jeannette, who had been in the family for twenty-five years, and was devotedly attached to it; Jean-Pierre, the second son, a young man of twenty-five, well disposed, but of little force of character; Marc-Antoine, the eldest son, twenty-eight, of powerful frame and gloomy disposition; and, finally, an accidental guest, Gaubert Lavaysse, a young man from Bordeaux, who had come to visit his parents at Toulouse, before embarking for the West Indies.

Marc-Antoine, the eldest son, was the black sheep of the flock. In youth, he had shown some taste for literature, and was thought to have a talent for oratory. Having an aversion for his father's business, he had studied law, and was prepared to enter the profession, when he was met by the discovery that he could not be admitted to the bar without producing from the curé of his parish a certificate of Catholicity. He tried to gain this certificate by concealing that he was a Protestant. The fact being discovered, he fell into a morose habit, and

wasted his time in billiards and tennis. He was a member of a dramatic company, and was observed to be particularly fond of declaiming passages from the dramatic poets upon suicide. Hamlet's soliloquy on that subject was one of his favorite morsels. His case was the common one of a young man discontented with the homely, honorable lot to which he was born, without possessing qualities that might have enabled him to achieve one more distinguished. Dissolute as he was, he was the only bigot of his family. He was capable of deceit to evade the legal obstacle to his rise; but he was not capable of abjuring a faith which he believed to be essential to salvation. No member of the household but himself had shown resentment at the conversion of his brother Louis.

It was remembered afterwards that he had never been so depressed and silent as during that afternoon and evening. He had made up his mind to destroy himself, and the time had come. He accomplished his purpose with deliberation, and in a way to give the greatest amount of shock and misery to others. He rose from the supper-table about eight o'clock in the evening, and went down-stairs to the shop. He took off his coat, folded it neatly, and laid it upon the counter. He placed a wooden instrument, used in binding bales of cloth, across two door-posts, and to this he hanged himself. He continued to hang unobserved for an hour or more, while the family conversed, after their evening meal, in the pleasant way of French families. The second son, Pierre, even fell asleep in his arm-chair, so quiet, so every way natural and ordinary, was the state of things in the sitting-room. The manner in which the dread discovery was made was related with affecting simplicity by the mother: —

"On the day so unfortunate for us, M. Gaubert Lavaysse arrived from Bordeaux to see his parents, who were at their country house; and, between four and five in the afternoon, while he was looking about to hire a horse to join them, he came to our house, and my husband said to him that, since he could not get away, it would give us pleasure if he would sup with us, to which the young man assented; and he came up to see me in my room, where I was, according to my custom. The first compliments exchanged, he said to me, 'I am going to sup with you; your husband has invited me!' I expressed my satisfaction, and I left him some moments to go and give orders to my

servant. In consequence of the invitation, I was obliged also to look for my eldest son, — whom I found seated all alone in the shop, plunged in thought, — to ask him to go and buy some Roquefort cheese; he was usually our purchaser of that article, because he was a better judge of it than the others. I therefore said to him, 'Come, now, go and buy some Roquefort cheese; here is the money for it, and give the change to your father.' I went back to my chamber to rejoin the young man whom I had left there. A few moments after, however, he went away, saying that he wished to return to the hay-dealers to see if a horse had not come in, as he meant absolutely to start the next day for his father's country house; and he went out.

"When my eldest son had bought the cheese, the supper hour having arrived, everybody (including M. Lavaysse, who had come in again) went to the table. During the supper, which was not very long, we talked of indifferent things, and, among others, of the antiquities at the City Hall; and my younger son, Pierre, tried to mention some of them, and his brother interrupted him, because he did not describe them well nor correctly.

"While we were still at the dessert, that unfortunate child [*enfant*] — I mean my eldest son — rose from the table, as his custom was, and went into the kitchen. The servant said to him, 'Are you cold, Mr. Eldest? [*Monsieur l'Aîné.*] Warm yourself.' He replied to her, 'Quite the contrary; I am burning hot;' and he went out.

"We remained some moments longer at the table, after which we passed into the sitting-room, — M. Lavaysse, my husband, my son, and myself. The first two took seats upon the sofa, my younger son in an arm-chair, and myself in an ordinary chair; and there we conversed together. My younger son went to sleep, and about a quarter to ten M. Lavaysse took leave of us, and we woke my younger son to accompany the said Lavaysse, putting the candle in his hand to light him down; and they descended together.

"But when they had reached the bottom, the instant after, we heard cries of alarm, without distinguishing what was said; upon which, my husband ran down, and I remained, trembling, at the head of the stairs, not daring to descend, not knowing what could be the matter.

"Nevertheless, seeing no one come, I determined to go down, which I did; but I found at the bottom of the staircase M. Lavaysse, of whom I eagerly asked what had happened. He only said that he begged me to go up again, and that I should know; and he so urgently insisted upon my doing so that I went up with him into my room. Doubtless, it was to spare me the pain of seeing my son in that condition; and he went down again. But my uncertainty was too painful to be long borne; I therefore called my servant, and said

to her, 'Jeannette, go and see what is the matter down there. I do not know what has happened; I am all of a tremble.' And I put the candle into her hand, and she descended. Not seeing her come back, I went down myself. But, great God! What was my anguish and my astonishment, when I saw that dear son stretched upon the floor! Nevertheless, I did not believe him dead, and I ran to find some Queen-of-Hungary water, believing he had been taken ill; and, as hope is that which last abandons us, I applied all the possible remedies to recall him to life, not being able to persuade myself that he was dead.

"We all indulged hopes, since the surgeon had been sent for; and he was near me without my seeing him, until he told me that it was useless to do anything more for him, for he was dead. I insisted that it could not be, and begged him to renew his exertions, and to examine him more carefully, which he did, without avail; it was but too true. And during all this time my husband was leaning upon a counter, in utter despair, in such a condition that my heart was torn between the deplorable spectacle of my dead son and the fear of losing that dear husband from the grief to which he entirely abandoned himself, without heeding any consolation; and it was in this state that the officers of justice found us, when they arrested us in our sitting-room, to which we had again ascended."[1]

Such was the mother's narrative. One or two other facts will complete the reader's knowledge of what passed within the house on that woful night. After summoning the surgeon, Pierre, the younger son, discovering that his brother had indeed taken his own life, lost his self-possession, and was about to rush into the street, as he said, "to ask advice everywhere." His father called him back, and said to him, "Do not go and spread abroad the report that your brother has made away with himself. Save at least the honor of your miserable family." Pierre promised to obey. He ran out. He went to the billiard saloon frequented by his brother, and asked, with tears in his eyes, if his brother had had a quarrel with any one. He found Lavaysse again, and begged him also to deny the suicide of his brother. The young man consented to do so, desiring to save the family from the shame and loss which suicide involved. Under the ancient laws of the kingdom, a dead man suspected of having taken his own life was put on his trial, as though he were alive, and, if convicted, he was drawn, naked,

[1] Coquerel, page 76.

through the streets on a tumbril, with the face downward, pelted by the populace with mud and stones, and then hung in chains on a gibbet. All his property was confiscated to the king. The afflicted father shrank from the anguish and ignominy of such scenes. It was a natural and most pardonable error, but it was a fatal one.

Passers-by heard the outcry within the house. A few persons gathered about the door. The strange noises continuing, there was soon a considerable crowd of people, whose excitement increased every moment. While they were eagerly pressing about the house, the door was thrown open, and they saw burst from it and rush away a strange young man, in the dress of a gentleman: three-cornered hat, gray coat, red waistcoat, red breeches, and a sword. This was Lavaysse, whose family belonged to the *noblesse* of the bar, and who could therefore wear a sword and gay-colored garments. A moment after, Pierre Calas came out, crazy with fright, who also tore away in wild haste; and when he had brought the surgeon he ran out again, utterly bewildered. Before many minutes had passed, there was a multitude of people about the house, all in a fury of curiosity to know what terrible thing had happened. The rumor quickly spread that it was an affair of sudden death; and soon it began to be reported that the eldest son of the family had been found dead, perhaps murdered! A voice was heard from the midst of the crowd, saying,—

"*Those Huguenots have killed their son to prevent his turning Catholic!*"

Gunpowder is not readier to ignite from a roving spark than those excited provincials were to take fire from such words as those, which harmonized with their habitual feelings concerning Protestants,— feelings kept alive by the annual celebration of the great massacre of 1562. The words were repeated to every new-comer; and the arrival of the police, sent for by the afflicted family, Lavaysse serving as their messenger, confirmed the people in the belief that a fearful crime had been committed. David, one of the eight capitouls or chief magistrates of the city, an infuriate and servile bigot, arrived, erelong, to take charge of the proceedings. He, too, heard the dreadful cry: "Those Huguenots have killed their son to prevent his turning Catholic!" and if the words had blazed out upon him across

the midnight sky in letters of miraculous fire he could not have believed them with more complete and instantaneous faith. And it is precisely such beliefs, not received through the reason, that are clung to against reason.

The family, father, mother, son, and servant, with their guest, Lavaysse, and an old friend who had come in on hearing of the catastrophe, were conducted to the Hôtel de Ville, preceded by the corpse upon a bier, already an object of veneration to the people. The family were not yet aware of the awful charge that had been launched against them in the hearing of the crowd, but supposed that they were required only to go to the Hôtel de Ville to give more formal testimony as to what had occurred at their house. They expected to sleep at home that night, and Pierre Calas placed a lighted candle in the entry to give them light on their return. The capitoul David "smiled," it is said, "at their simplicity," and ordered the candle to be put out, saying, "They will not come back so soon." The march to the Hôtel de Ville was like a midnight funeral. The body upon its bier was followed by the family, by the magistrates, forty of the city guard, and a great number of people. No one seems to have had any doubt of the guilt of the prisoners. To one of the less excited magistrates, who advised more caution in the proceedings, David replied, "I take the whole responsibility upon myself." He kept repeating, "This is an affair of religion."

It was past midnight when the cortege reached the Hôtel de Ville. The prisoners, not yet realizing their situation, all concealed the fact that the deceased had taken his own life. It was a device the most maladroit; for if he had not killed himself, who could have killed him? There was the rope, and there was the livid circle around his neck, which that rope had made. If he had not hanged himself, he must have been strangled by the united exertions of the family. That natural and venial falsehood of theirs was a kind of confession of their own guilt; it was accepted as such by the excited people of Toulouse, trained from infancy to *believe*, forbidden always to question. After a brief preliminary examination, the prisoners were all committed to close and solitary confinement in the cells of the building. Those assigned to the father and mother were windowless dungeons. The corpse was placed

for safe-keeping in the torture-chamber, and the next day was embalmed. On following days, when each of the prisoners was examined separately upon oath, the fiction of their finding Marc-Antoine strangled upon the floor was abandoned, and each of them related the events of the evening exactly as they had occurred. Their depositions, which were as natural, as simple, and as probable as the narrative of the mother given above, were also in perfect accord upon material points, and would have carried instant conviction to minds not debauched and blinded by *l'Infâme*.

The next morning all Toulouse heard of these events, and the news quickly spread over the province. What did the people hear? They heard that a family of Protestants had killed their eldest son to prevent his turning Catholic, — according to the well-known custom of Protestants in such cases! Marc-Antoine Calas was at once accepted as a martyr. In this condition of the provincial mind, the capitoul David played a part congenial to his limited and ferocious nature. He inflamed the popular fury by every means in his power, and the clergy, without one known exception, eagerly seconded his endeavors. It was through his influence that, when the body of the suicide had lain three weeks in the torture-room, it was borne to the grave with more than royal pomp. A Sunday afternoon was appointed for the burial, a time when the whole population was at leisure. An immense procession, headed by more than forty priests, accompanied the corpse from the Hôtel de Ville to the cathedral; the White Penitents conspicuous in the procession, bearing candles and the banner of their order. One of the wild fictions current in the city was that the dead man had been upon the point of joining these White Penitents. A vast concourse filled the cathedral to witness the funeral service.

Some days after, the White Penitents held in their chapel a hideous solemnity for the repose of the suicide's soul, in which the other religious orders participated by delegations. The church was hung with white cloth, and in the middle of it a lofty catafalque was erected, also draped in white, on the summit of which was set up a hired skeleton, in a standing posture; holding in one hand a branch of palm, emblem of martyrdom, and in the other an inscription in large letters,

"ABJURATION OF HERESY." At the feet of the skeleton was the name of the "martyr," Marc-Antoine Calas. A second service of the same character was held in the chapel of another order, a few days after.[1]

For three successive Sundays, in October and November, 1761, an admonition or menace (*monitoire*) was read in all the churches of Toulouse, which notified the people precisely what testimony was needed by the public prosecutors to convict the family. By this document all persons were threatened with dire penalty who had knowledge of the affair and failed to come forward and testify. This solemn denunciation was particularly directed —

(1.) "Against all those who know, by hearsay or otherwise, that Marc-Antoine Calas had renounced the religion pretending to be reformed, in which he was educated; that he had attended the ceremonies of the Roman Catholic church; that he had presented himself at the sacrament of penitence; and that he was to make a public abjuration after the 13th of the present month of October. Also, to all those to whom Marc-Antoine Calas had communicated his intention.

(2.) "Against all those who know, by hearsay or otherwise, that, on account of this change of belief, the Sieur Marc-Antoine Calas was threatened, maltreated, and regarded with an evil eye in his house; that the person who threatened him told him that, if he made a public abjuration, he would have no other executioner than himself.

(3.) "Against all those who know, by hearsay or otherwise, that a woman, reputed to be attached to heresy, urged on her husband to such menaces, and herself threatened Marc-Antoine Calas.

(4.) "Against all those who know, by hearsay or otherwise, that, on the 13th of the present month, in the morning, a council was held in a house of the parish of La Daurade, at which the death of Marc-Antoine Calas was resolved upon or advised; and to those who, on the same morning, saw a certain number of the said persons enter or leave the said house.

(5.) "Against all those who know, by hearsay or otherwise, that, on the same day, the 13th of the month of October, between sunset and near ten o'clock, that execrable resolve was carried out by forcing Marc-Antoine Calas to his knees; who, by surprise or by force, was strangled or hung with a rope with two knots, — one to strangle, and the other to be fastened to the billet of wood used for binding

[1] Jean Calas et sa Famille, 113.

bales of cloth, by means of which Marc-Antoine Calas was strangled and put to death, either by suspension or by twisting.

(6.) "Against all those who heard a voice crying for help against the assassin; and, afterwards, '*Ah, my God! What have I done to you? Have mercy on me!*' The same voice having then become plaintive, and saying, '*Ah, my God! Ah, my God!*'

(7.) "Against all those to whom Marc-Antoine Calas communicated the inquietudes which he experienced in his house, which rendered him sad and melancholy.

(8.) "Against all those who know that there arrived from Bordeaux, the evening before the 13th, a young man of that city, who, not finding horses to join his family at their country house, was invited to supper in the house, was present, consenting to or participating in the act.

(9.) "Against all those who know, by hearsay or otherwise, who are the authors, accomplices, abettors, favorers, of this crime, which was one of the most detestable."

Testimony of the kind desired, "by hearsay or otherwise," could not be wanting in the frenzied Toulouse of the autumn of 1761. A barber's assistant of the neighborhood told his companions that, while passing the house on the fatal evening, he had heard Marc-Antoine cry out, "Ah, *mon Dieu*, they are strangling me! Ah, *mon Dieu*, they are assassinating me!" One of his comrades understood the words to be, "Ah, *father*, you are strangling me!" Probably, the lad said these things merely to make himself of consequence during a period of excitement. When the trial came, he had disappeared from the city, and could not be found, a circumstance that was of overwhelming weight against the accused. Several witnesses testified to having heard passers-by *say* that they had heard similar outcries; such as, "Ah, father, you are killing me! Have pity upon me! Let me say a prayer!" and others. Hearsay testimony seems to have been regarded by the Toulouse parliament, that tried the case, as of equal weight with the testimony of eye-witnesses. A priest, for example, deposed thus: "*Some one*, whose name I cannot recall, assured me that he had been told by the wig-maker, Durand, who lives in the great street near the house of the Sieur Calas, that his assistant, having gone out into the street, heard the cries and pleadings, very nearly as reported in the *monitoire;* and *I believe* he saw appear from the door of the said Sieur Calas a young man,

having in his hand a sword, and looking to the right and to the left."

This is a fair specimen of the testimony bearing against the accused. The probabilities and facts spoke for them plainly enough, and there was no evidence against them which an enlightened and dispassionate judge would have admitted. The winter was spent in laborious proceedings; and, after all, some of the most obvious precautions and inquiries were omitted. It was assumed that the deceased *could* not have hanged himself in the place where he was found; but, to the last, this assumption was not put to the test of an inspection of the premises by those who were to pronounce on the case. The bar was so intimidated that the prisoners had no efficient defense, and only one member of the parliament preserved his judgment unimpaired. Absurd inconsistency marked every stage of the trial to the very end. If Marc-Antoine was strangled, the deed must have been done by the two young men, aided and abetted by the parents and by the servant, who was an unusually devout Catholic. The court, however, determined to decide first upon the guilt of the father, in the expectation of extorting a confession from him, under torture, which would inculpate the rest.

Thirteen members of the parliament of Toulouse tried this cause. After holding ten long sessions, debating and comparing the testimony, they came to a vote. One man alone gave his voice for unconditional acquittal. Two were of opinion that, before deciding the case, the court ought to satisfy itself beyond doubt whether it was a *possible* thing for the deceased to have hanged himself with the cord and billet produced, in the door-way specified. Three voted for the subjection of the old man to torture, reserving the sentence of death until he had confessed his guilt. Seven voted for death. By the old law, a bare majority did not suffice for a capital sentence. After another prolonged discussion, the oldest member of the court changed his opinion; and thus, by eight votes to five, Jean Calas was doomed to torture and death upon the wheel.

In one particular the ancient laws were more merciful than ours: they did not add the misery of long anticipation to the anguish of death. Jean Calas was sentenced March 9, 1762, and the sentence was executed the next day.

We ought not to shrink from the contemplation of the agony which *l'Infâme* has inflicted, because man is still man, and what man has done to man he can do again. Fanatic magistrates and priests could not have done such things, if there had not been behind them a preponderance of credulous people, who would have done the same, or worse, if they had been in authority. It was Toulouse, it was imperfectly developed man, it was man the Believer, that blasted this innocent family; and we must not therefore turn away our eyes from the spectacle of their anguish. For five months the whole family, including their Catholic servant and their guest, Lavaysse, had been confined in separate dungeons, heavily chained by the feet. On the morning of March 10th, the irons were removed from the father, who was then conducted to the court-room, where, in presence of the magistrates, his long sentence was read to him. He was taken thence to the torture-room, accompanied by the same magistrates, and placed in readiness to undergo the *question ordinaire*. He was warned and exhorted to confess his crimes and to reveal his accomplices; the oath was administered to him; he swore to tell the truth; and the magistrates, after warning and exhorting him again, left him to suffer. In sight of the rack, clad only in a pair of linen drawers, but not yet subjected to the torture, he was questioned concerning all the events of the fatal evening. His answers, which were recorded by a clerk, were, in all respects, consistent with his statement given many times before. Being asked, finally, to name his accomplices, he replied that, as no crime had been committed, he could have had none.

The executioner then reported his "contumacy" to the magistrates in their chamber, whereupon he and his assistants took an oath upon a crucifix to administer the torture in strict conformity with law and usage. The *question ordinaire* consisted in stretching the body until all the limbs were drawn from their sockets. This virtuous old man, good citizen and good father, gentlest and kindest of men, was treated very much as that malefactor was treated whom John Evelyn saw tortured in Paris in the previous century.[1] They first bound him by the wrists to an iron ring in the solid stone wall, four feet from the ground, and his feet to another ring in the floor

[1] Memoirs of John Evelyn, page 210. New York, 1870.

of the room, with an ample length of rope between his feet and the ring. While he hung thus aslant, in acute pain, the pull was increased tenfold by sliding under the lower rope a wooden horse. Every limb was instantly dislocated, and the body was drawn out beyond its natural length several inches. Being questioned again, he adhered to his former answers. Next, a taller horse was thrust under the rope, which had the effect of drawing him out to a frightful length, and increasing the anguish to the utmost that could be borne. He did not waver nor cry out, but calmly replied that no one had committed a crime in his house that night.

This ended the *question ordinaire*. He was allowed a rest of half an hour, during which he was again exhorted by the magistrates to tell the truth, as well as by two celebrated preachers, one styled the royal doctor of the University, and the other professor of theology. He was next applied to the *question extraordinaire*, a masterpiece of combined indignity and anguish. They laid this father, of sixty-four honorable, innocent years, upon a table, on his back, with his head extended a little beyond the end of it; and while he was thus extended one man held his nose, and another poured slowly into his mouth, from a horn, three pints of water. The man holding the nose occasionally loosened his hold a little, to allow the victim to take breath. With only a moment's pause between each, five such vessels of water were poured slowly into his mouth, until his body was visibly swollen, and the sufferer endured the anguish of a hundred drownings. There was then a pause, during which he was once more questioned, and once more asserted his innocence. Five more horns full of water, of about three pints' capacity, were poured into his mouth, swelling his body to more than twice its natural size. Questioned again, he again denied the charge. He was then released, restoratives were given him, and he was handed over to the two priests, to be prepared by them for death.

He was next placed upon the tumbril, wearing only a shirt, and began the long journey to the place of execution, beheld by thousands of people as he was carried slowly by. "I am innocent," he said, from time to time. Before the great gate of the cathedral the procession halted. The old man was required to dismount as best he could, kneel down, and go

through some form of asking forgiveness "of God and the king" for what he had not done. He reached the scaffold, at length. As he was about to ascend, a priest whom he had known exhorted him to confess. "What, father!" said he; "you too believe, then, that a man can kill his own son?" They bound him to a wooden cross that lay upon the scaffold, and the executioner, with an iron bar, broke each of his limbs in two places, striking eleven blows in all, and then left him for two hours to die, if he could. He lived the two hours. During that time he spoke only words of charity and compassion. He prayed for his judges, clearly discerning that they, too, knew not what they did. A few moments before the end, being again exhorted by the priest to avow the truth, he said, —

"I have spoken it. I die innocent. Jesus Christ, who was innocence itself, was willing to die for me by a punishment still more cruel. I do not regret a life the termination of which, I hope, will lead me to eternal happiness. I pity my wife and my son; but that visitor, that son of M. Lavaysse, to whom I thought merely to show politeness by inviting him to supper, — ah, it is he who still increases my sorrow!"

The capitoul David, furious to see his victim escaping him without confession, cried out, "Wretch! Look at the fire there which is about to reduce your body to ashes; speak the truth!" Jean Calas turned aside his head, and the executioner put an end to his sufferings by strangling him. His body was bound to the stake and burned.

His heroic persistence in asserting his innocence and the innocence of his family saved their lives. Further proceedings against them were stayed. The mother was set at liberty, after some delay. The two daughters were consigned to a convent. Pierre, frightened into pretending to abjure his religion, was set at liberty, also. Lavaysse was restored to his family, broken in health, and, as it seemed, hopelessly dishonored. The servant found temporary refuge in a convent. The property of the family was wasted and plundered, and, if any remained, it was confiscated to the king. The stricken mother, bereft of husband, children, home, and hope, crept into retirement near Toulouse, and was seen there no more. The people of Toulouse, and the people generally in the south of

France, remained fully persuaded that this family had murdered their eldest son to prevent his joining the true church.

Even young Donat Calas, apprenticed to a manufacturer at Nismes, a hundred and fifty miles distant, was enveloped in the ruin of his family. When the news reached Nismes of the dreadful events of October, his friends advised him to get beyond the boundaries of France, lest he should be summoned to Toulouse as a witness or an accomplice. He went to Geneva, and was living there when his father was executed. Terror seized the Protestant families of the southern provinces, many of whom sold their possessions, and sought safety in Switzerland also. It wanted little to provoke another exodus of Protestants from France, like that which had occurred after the revocation of the tolerant edict of Henry IV.

CHAPTER XXXI.

VOLTAIRE INTERFERES.

A MERCHANT of Marseilles, Dominique Audibert by name, chanced to be in Toulouse, on a journey northward, during the last days of the life of Jean Calas, and probably witnessed some of the closing scenes of the tragedy. He was a man of intelligence, of an educated family, a member of the Academy of Marseilles; and therefore, upon inquiring into the case, he was satisfied that the family was innocent. Pursuing his journey, he reached Geneva, and called upon Voltaire to make known to him these horrible events. Voltaire himself has related the impression which M. Audibert's narrative made upon him: —

"Near the end of March, 1762, a traveler who had passed through Languedoc, and who came to my retreat, two leagues from Geneva, informed me of the execution of Calas, and assured me that he was innocent. I replied to him that his crime was not probable; but it was still less probable that disinterested judges should have condemned an innocent man to be broken upon the wheel.

"I learned the next day that one of the children of that unfortunate father had fled into Switzerland, not far from my house. His flight made me presume that the family was guilty. Nevertheless, I reflected that the father had been condemned to death for having slain his son for the sake of religion, and that that father was sixty-nine years old.[1] I do not remember ever to have read that any old man had been possessed by so horrible a fanaticism. I had always remarked that that mania usually attacked only young people, whose imagination, ardent, tumultuous, and feeble, becomes inflamed by superstition.

"I sent for young Calas. I expected to see a fierce zealot, such as his province has sometimes produced. I saw a child, simple, ingenuous, of a countenance the most amiable and interesting, and who in speaking to me made useless efforts to restrain his tears. He told me that he was living at Nismes, an apprentice to a manufacturer, when

[1] Sixty-four.

the public voice informed him that all his family at Toulouse were about to be condemned to death. He said that almost all Languedoc believed them guilty, and that, in order to escape from such frightful opprobrium, he had come to conceal himself in Switzerland.

"I asked him if his father and mother were of a violent character. He told me that they had never beaten one of their children, and that there were no parents more indulgent and more tender.

"I confess that little more was necessary to make me strongly presume the innocence of the family. I sought additional information from two merchants of Geneva, of well-known probity, who had lodged at Toulouse in the house of the Calas family. They confirmed me in my opinion. Far from believing the family fanatic and parricidal, I thought I saw that it was fanatics who had accused and ruined them. I knew long ago of what party spirit and calumny are capable.

"But what was my astonishment when, having written to Languedoc concerning this strange event, both Catholics and Protestants replied to me that the guilt of the family was beyond reasonable doubt! I was not convinced. I took the liberty to write to those who had governed the province, to commandants of neighboring provinces, to ministers of state, who advised me unanimously not to mingle in so bad a business. All the world condemned me, and I persisted. This is what I did: —

"The widow of Calas, from whom, as a climax of misery and outrage, they had taken away her daughters, had retired to solitude, where she was nourished upon her tears, and waited for death. I did not inquire if she was attached or not to the Protestant religion, but only if she believed in a God, a rewarder of virtue and an avenger of crime. I caused her to be asked if she would declare in the name of God that her husband had died innocent. She did not hesitate. I hesitated no more."[1]

It was the narrative of Madame Calas, given above, which removed the last doubt from his mind. That narrative ended thus: "This is the affair, just as it passed, word for word; and I pray God, who knows our innocence, to punish me eternally if I have augmented or diminished an iota, and if I have not spoken the pure truth concerning all these circumstances. I am ready to seal this truth with my blood." He had been diligently investigating the case a month when this letter was forwarded to him, and during that period he was sure only that an appalling crime had been committed in Toulouse: perhaps,

[1] Voltaire to Damilaville, March 1, 1765. 38 Œuvres de Voltaire, 384.

by the Calas family; perhaps, by the magistrates; certainly, by *l'Infâme!* With exacter truth he afterwards described the criminal to be "Human Nature." As soon as he had read the affecting letter of the stricken mother, he was prepared to act.

The appeal from the province is to the metropolis; and he at once accepted the duty of initiating and conducting that appeal. His letters of the spring of 1762 show the hold this awful business had taken of him. To the Cardinal de Bernis, March 25th (a day or two after hearing the story from M. Audibert): "Shall I dare entreat your Eminence to be so good as to tell me what I am to think of the frightful affair of this Calas, broken on the wheel at Toulouse for having hanged his son? . . . . It lies heavy on my heart; it saddens me in my pleasures; it spoils them." To D'Argental, March 27th: "You will ask me, perhaps, my divine angels, why I interest myself so strongly in this Calas, who has been broken on the wheel? It is because I am a man; it is because I see all foreigners indignant; it is because all your Swiss Protestant officers say that they will not fight heartily for a nation which breaks their brethren on the wheel without any proof. . . . . Could you not induce M. de Choiseul to have this fearful event investigated, which dishonors human nature, whether Calas is guilty or innocent?" To D'Argental, June 4th: "On my knees I implore you to investigate the case. Speak of it to M. de Choiseul; it is easy to learn the truth from M. de Saint-Florentin [his colleague in the ministry], and in my opinion that truth concerns the human race."

Such were his feelings. He executed his purpose of rehabilitating the family as a man conducts a cause upon the issue of which depend his whole estate, his good name, and the future of his children. While he was still annotating Corneille, writing the Russian Peter, laying out his park and plantations, he devoted himself to this new task, as though he had no other object or hope in life. Donat Calas he took into his family, and, in order to be nearer Geneva, he went back for a while to Les Délices, leaving his beloved farms and garden, his church and tomb, not yet completed. He was closeted often with an able advocate of Geneva, M. Végobre, still an honored and familiar name there, from whom he obtained the legal points involved and a statement of the steps to be taken.

He induced a merchant of Montauban, Ribotte-Charon by name, — a man of letters, vehemently interested in the case, — to go to Toulouse, and personally investigate the facts and inspect the localities. He employed M. Chazel, a solicitor of Montpellier, an important city of Languedoc, to address the leading magistrates and other officials of the province, asking for copies of the documents and testimony. M. Chazel informed him that the official circles of Languedoc were dumb with terror. "No well-informed person dares speak out. The magistrates, who are bound to exhibit the truth to the light of day, remain obstinately silent, and their silence embarrasses both the friends and the enemies of the Calas family." He soon discovered that there was no hope of remedial action from the perpetrators of the iniquity.

Other tactics were obviously necessary. There chanced to be then living at Geneva, for consultation with Dr. Tronchin, a French lady of distinction, connected by birth and marriage with the most important families in the kingdom. This was the Duchess of Enville, a frequenter of Voltaire's house and theatre. He fired her with something of his own burning zeal, and she wrote many letters on the case to her friends at court and in the ministry. The minister most concerned with internal affairs of this nature was the chancellor, Count of Saint-Florentin. Voltaire caused him to be assailed on every side and from every quarter. The Duchess of Enville, the Duke of Richelieu, and the Duke of Villars wrote to him, entreating him to order an investigation; while Voltaire himself wrote to M. Ménard, the same minister's first clerk, and to M. Chaban, his confidential adviser. Dr. Tronchin, too, was stirred up by him to write to some of his illustrious patients, who had the ear of M. de Saint-Florentin. He was far from neglecting M. de Choiseul and Madame de Pompadour; but, as they were "philosophers" at heart, he knew that, when the time came, he could count upon their zealous coöperation. Meanwhile, he ascertained the situation and circumstances of each member of the ruined family. Louis Calas came from his convent to Geneva. The widow, a woman of great worth and dignity, he induced to take up her abode in Paris, where he provided for her a safe retreat, placed her in charge of the D'Argentals, and employed in her cause two of the most dis-

tinguished advocates of the kingdom. After many months, her daughters were enabled by him to join her there. The expense of all these operations he took upon himself, and paid everybody from his own purse, until he had set flowing in upon the family abundant streams from the benevolence of Europe.

Meanwhile, he was preparing to bring to the support of sympathizing ministers and judges an irresistible public opinion. First, he published a pamphlet, one of the most affecting and ingenious ever composed, which he entitled "Original Documents concerning the Death of the Sieurs Calas, and the Judgment rendered at Toulouse." These documents were four in number: first, the Narrative of Madame Calas, already given in these pages; second, a Letter purporting to be written by young Donat Calas to his mother, relating his flight from Nismes to Geneva, and urging her to consecrate her life to the restoration of the good name of the family; third, an Appeal from Donat Calas to the public on behalf of his father, mother, and brother, relating the whole case, with notes and elucidations; and, finally, a Declaration by Pierre Calas, narrating with simplicity the events of the case as witnessed by himself. All of these pieces, except the letter of Madame Calas, were rewritten by Voltaire, who knew his art too well not to adhere closely to the story as related to himself by the two young men. The notes were chiefly composed of anecdotes and incidents of the suicide, the trial, the execution, and the subsequent scenes, such as were best calculated to convey an impression of the artless innocence of the family. No well-disposed person can even now read this pamphlet without strong emotion. "Persist, then, my mother," Donat concludes, "in your enterprise. Never mind our fortune. We are five children without bread; but we all have honor, and, like you, we prefer it to our life. I throw myself at your feet; I bathe them with my tears; I ask your benediction with a respect which your woes augment."

There was no allusion in this pamphlet to Voltaire or to any of his friends. The reader saw in it simply the shattered household: a mother, two young daughters, and two young sons, robbed of father, home, estate, and good name; driven from their native province; blameless, and lifting up their hands to their country in appeal from the delirium of a benighted province.

He followed this masterpiece of art and truth with another pamphlet, entitled "History of Elizabeth Canning and of the Calas Family," written in the tone of an independent witness, who, by chance, had obtained some light upon a matter of public interest. It began in an enticing manner: "I was in London in 1753, when the affair of young Elizabeth Canning made so much noise." This was a case in which circumstantial testimony, given under the influence of terror, came near bringing to the gallows nine innocent persons. The story brought home the familiar truth that "whoever has lied will generally lie again, for fear of being thought a liar." A history of the Calas affair followed, in which this truth was ingeniously illustrated, and the "obstinate silence" of the magistrates of Toulouse was explained and parried.

All this was but preliminary; it was intended to create a public interest in the family, which would compel attention to the case on the part of the government. As soon as Madame Calas was established in her abode at Paris, he sent her a letter of introduction to a young advocate, Elie de Beaumont; not yet known to general fame, but of good repute in the circle of philosophers. This note of introduction, of June 11, 1762, may serve to show how thoroughly Voltaire executed every detail of the business: —

"I present to you, monsieur, the most unfortunate of all women, who asks the thing in the world which is most just. Inform me, I pray you, at once, what measures can be taken. I charge myself with the recompense; I am only too glad to bestow it upon talent so brilliant as yours. This case, besides being so strange and so important, can bring you infinite honor; and, in your noble profession, honor leads sooner or later to fortune. This affair, in which I take the most intense interest, is so extraordinary that it will be necessary to employ extraordinary means. Rest assured that the parliament of Toulouse will supply no weapons against itself; it has forbidden the communication of the documents to any one, and even an extract from the sentence. There is only one influence [*protection*] great enough to obtain from the chancellor [Saint-Florentin] or from the king an order to send a copy of the record. We are seeking that influence: the *cry of the public*, indignant and compassionate, must procure it. It is to the interest of the state to discover on which side is the most horrible fanaticism. I do not doubt that this enterprise appears to you extremely important; I entreat you to speak of it to the magistrates and

jurists of your acquaintance, and induce them to speak to the chancellor. Let us try to excite his compassion and his sense of justice; after which you will enjoy the glory of having been the avenger of innocence, and of having warned judges that they cannot with impunity trifle with the blood of human beings. Oh, cruel men! They forgot that they were human! Oh, the barbarians!"

He had chosen well his man. Elie de Beaumont conducted the cause with a skill worthy of it. In September he was ready with his first Mémoire, or statement of the facts, which remains to this day one of the classics of the French advocate's library. He demonstrated, by the unquestioned facts of the case, "three impossibilities" in the way of the murder of the young man by the family. "I add a fourth impossibility," wrote Voltaire to the young lawyer: "it is that of resisting your arguments. I join my gratitude to that which the family owe you. I venture to say that the judges of Toulouse owe you gratitude also, for you have enlightened them upon their faults."

Mischief is often done quickly; it is usually undone slowly. In this case, as frequently happens, the men who alone could begin the remedial work were of the same temper as those who had done the wrong. The king and his family, the chancellor, several of the judges, cherished the prejudices so congenial to dull minds; and their organ, Fréron, pursued his profitable vocation of flattering these prejudices. Fréron, from first to last, justified Voltaire's antipathy by siding against the Calas family. It was found impossible for some weeks to get a license for the printing of Elie de Beaumont's Mémoire. Copies were procured from Geneva and Holland, and the success of the piece with the public was unexampled.

Voltaire resorted to the expedient of bringing to bear upon the stolid people of Versailles the public opinion of foreign countries. His Calas pamphlets (seven in all) were translated and published in England and Germany, where they produced a profound and universal effect. The English, who still knew how to give, if not how to behave, nobly exercised their gift of giving on this occasion. The subscription for the Calas family was headed by the young queen of George III., a shining personage then, who had just bestowed upon her new country an heir to the throne. The Archbishop of Canterbury fol-

lowed. Ten of the other bishops subscribed, as well as "seventy-nine lords and forty-seven gentlemen," whose names were printed at the beginning of one of the later pamphlets of Voltaire. Several German princes and nobles subscribed; the Swiss people helped; and gifts came in from almost all the Protestant communities. The Empress of Russia and the King of Poland contributed. The expense of maintaining five persons, and of conducting litigation so difficult and prolonged, was becoming very great, and these golden gifts were welcome. But their best effect was in dissolving the prejudices of the court, and interesting its pride on behalf of the Calas family.

These measures were seconded by the firm and dignified demeanor of Madame Calas and the engaging manners of her daughters. During the following winter, it was reckoned a favor and a distinction to be admitted to their presence; they visited a few important persons, and received many more at the house of the D'Argentals. All the world smiled upon them, and every one seemed impatient for the king's council to take the first step. No power but that of the royal council could annul the decree of a parliament, or compel the surrender of its record.

The important day came at length. The council was called to meet at Versailles March 7, 1763, three days before the first anniversary of Jean Calas's agony and death. It was to pronounce, first, upon the requisition of the family for a reopening of the case and a new trial by a metropolitan court; secondly, if this were granted, it was expected to order the magistrates of Toulouse to produce the record of the trial, sentence, and execution, with all the documents relating thereto. We have a very simple and pleasing narrative of the events of that day at Versailles, written the morning after by an eyewitness, — probably, as M. Coquerel conjectures, by young Lavaysse, the companion of the family in their ruin and in their restoration: —

"The affair of Madame Calas was decided yesterday at the council. I was with her at Versailles, with several other gentlemen, at the houses of ministers, and the reception which they gave her was most favorable. Nowhere was she kept waiting; as soon as she presented herself, both leaves of the doors flew open, and every one offered his

best consolation. The chancellor said to her, 'Your affair is one of the most interesting, madame; we sympathize with your situation; we heartily wish that you may find among us comfort in your affliction.' The welcome given her by the Duke of Praslin was most gracious. She went to the gallery with her daughters to see the king pass, where she was accosted by several lords. The Duke of A. and the Count of Noailles, who were of the number, promised to call the attention of the king to her. They selected her place, but their good intention had no effect; for, just as the king came in sight of her, a member of his suite fell, and by his fall drew away the attention of the court and king. All this occurred on Sunday.

"Monday morning, Madame Calas, toward nine o'clock, constituted herself a prisoner. Everything was in readiness; the papers were dated, signed, and carried to the manager of the cause. The young ladies went to the council-room to present themselves to their judges. The number of councilors present was prodigious, and the attendance of the ministers rendered the assembly still more brilliant. The requisition [to annul] was admitted with one voice. The documents and records were ordered to be brought [from Toulouse]. The advocate did not dare to ask for the originals of the procedure, for there was reason to believe that they would be refused, though I do not think that that would have made any difference.

"The elder of the young ladies was taken ill during the session of the council; she had a fainting fit, which was very severe and of long duration. She had not yet recovered when those gentlemen, having left the council room, came to announce to her the success of their endeavors. Some of them strove to give her remedies, — spirituous liquors, salts; flasks of every kind were eagerly offered. The charity of those gentlemen was not confined to Mademoiselle Calas; they were eager to obtain the formal discharge of Madame Calas. It plainly appeared in their conduct how deeply they felt the unhappiness of that family, and how indignant they were at the injustice which had been done them.

"The discharge having been pronounced, we conducted Madame Calas from prison, where she was seated upon a large couch, near a good fire. The jailer had caused to be served to her in the morning coffee, chocolate, and broth, according to the orders he had received; but we were much surprised at the noble answer he made when he was asked how much we had to pay. 'Madame Calas,' said he, 'is too severely afflicted for me to be willing to take anything from her. I wish it were in my power to render her services more agreeable; for no one respects her more than I do.' What a contrast to the people of Toulouse! The servants of all her judges and of all her protectors

regard her with admiration and respect. There is not one of them who has not read all the documents relating to her cause." [1]

Voltaire had waited long for this auspicious beginning of success, and there was nothing in which he was so little proficient as the art of waiting. "My dear brother," he wrote to Damilaville, "there is, then, justice upon the earth! There is, then, such a thing as humanity! Men are not all wicked rascals, as they say! It is the day of your triumph, my dear brother; you have served the family better than any one!" To all the advocates and friends who had given aid in the cause he poured out heartiest thanks and congratulations. If he gave the warmest praise to Damilaville, it was because of the peculiar fervor of his zeal, in which he seems to have surpassed all the "brethren." Damilaville, who began his career as an officer of the king's guard, was now first clerk in one of the tax-bureaus, an office which gave him the right to send parcels free of expense. He had used this privilege on behalf of Voltaire and his friends, which led to an intimacy with the lord of Ferney that increased in warmth until the death of Damilaville, in 1768. He is remembered only from his connection with Voltaire, whose letters bear testimony to his burning zeal in crushing *l'Infâme*. Others of the "brethren" had various objects and interests; Damilaville appears to have lived for this alone.

Upon receiving the glad tidings of the council's unanimous decision in favor of Madame Calas, Voltaire naturally concluded that the cause was substantially won. His patience was subjected to a very long trial. May arrived before the magistrates of Toulouse obeyed the order of the council. A new trial was ordered at Paris. Delay followed delay. There were new Mémoires, new pamphlets, new measures. At length, March 9, 1765, exactly three years after the sentence of Jean Calas was pronounced, that sentence was annulled; the good name of the father was restored; the accused family, their guest and their servant, were declared innocent; the confiscation of the estate was canceled: and all this was done by the unanimous decree of a numerous and distinguished court, with the heart-felt applause of enlightened Europe.

Many loyal hands made haste to send the particulars of the

[1] Jean Calas et sa Famille, par A. Coquerel, fils. Paris, 1858. Page 264.

glorious result to Ferney. Donat Calas was in Voltaire's room when the courier arrived with the precious packet of letters: one from Madame Calas herself, one from D'Argental, one from Elie de Beaumont, and several others. "We shed tears of emotion, little Calas and I," he wrote to D'Argental. "My old eyes furnished as many as his. We choked, my dear angels. It is philosophy alone that has won the victory. When will it be able to crush all the heads of this hydra?"

To his old friend Cideville, who was in Paris when the trial closed so happily, he wrote, "It was, to my fancy, the finest fifth act the stage has ever presented."

He did not yet feel that his triumph was complete. The family came out of court "rehabilitated," indeed, but penniless. The law expenses had amounted to more than fifty thousand francs; the support of the family had cost a large sum; there had been many expensive journeys; and thus the subscriptions, liberal as they had been, were all consumed. "The queen," wrote Voltaire to Damilaville, "has drunk the health of Madame Calas, but has not given her anything to drink." The fault was in part repaired. The judges who had tried the cause united in "imploring for the family the bounty of the king, whose paternal heart will be touched by their situation." The vice-chancellor, Maupeon, replied, on the king's behalf, that his majesty "had been pleased to cast upon them a favorable regard, and accorded to the widow a gratification of twelve thousand francs; to each of her daughters six thousand; three thousand to her sons; three thousand to her servant; and six thousand toward the expenses incurred." The vice-chancellor sent for the family, and made known to them the king's benevolence. They asked him if the king objected to their suing the magistrates of Toulouse for damages. He advised them to consult their friends and counsel on the point; they sought Voltaire's opinion. He said, in substance, Let well enough alone; and they took his advice. The capitoul David, who had been chiefly instrumental in bringing all these woes upon an innocent household, was deprived of his office in February, 1765; soon after, he lost his reason, threw himself out of a window, and so ended his life.

The king's bounty proving inadequate, the friends of the family entered warmly into a project for improving their circum-

stances. An engraving was made, representing Madame Calas, her daughters, her sons, her servant, and her guest in prison at Paris, awaiting the judgment of the court. The six-franc subscriptions poured in. Voltaire subscribed for twelve copies, and kept one of them hanging above his bed as long as he lived. The Duchess of Enville subscribed for one copy, and sent fifty louis to pay for it. The Duke of Choiseul paid a hundred louis for two copies. Princesses and duchesses gave their names and louis-d'or freely, and the public were following their example with generous enthusiasm, when the capricious *régime* spoiled the good work by suspending the "privilege." Baron Grimm reports that the reasons of this suspension, as given by "one of the first magistrates of the kingdom," were three in number: (1) the project of the engraving appeared to have been "instigated" by Voltaire; (2) the engraving would perpetuate the obloquy of the Toulouse parliament; (3) it was for the benefit of Protestants. After months of delay, during which the enthusiasm to subscribe had time to cool, the privilege was restored, and a considerable sum was raised.

Madame Calas and her daughters continued to live in Paris; her two sons settled in Geneva. She visited the young men in 1770, accompanied by Lavaysse, when she saw for the first time the saviour of her family at Ferney. "That good and virtuous mother," he wrote to D'Alembert, "came to see me a few days ago; I cried like a child." She wrote to him from Paris, December 27, 1770, to thank him for the welcome he had given her at Ferney, and to assure him that her gratitude was proportioned to the immeasurable services he had rendered her. She survived to 1792, when she died at Paris, in her eighty-second year. One of her daughters married a Protestant minister, and lived at Paris until 1820. The two sons prospered at Geneva, where Voltaire kept upon them a friendly eye, and promoted their interest as occasion offered. Every Protestant in France breathed freer and lived safer for what he had done on behalf of this family, and *l'Infâme* received a blow from which it has not recovered.

Few events of that century excited so wide or so durable an interest. M. Coquerel appends to his volume upon the history of the case a catalogue of publications relating to it, which numbers one hundred and thirteen works. The story has

been presented on the stage in ten plays, from the five-act tragedy to the one-act sketch. It has served as the theme of seven long poems. In England, Germany, Holland, and Switzerland, the important works upon the case were republished soon after their appearance in France. Besides the engraving just mentioned, there were others of considerable note, such as, "Jean Calas bidding Farewell to his Family;" "A Breakfast at Ferney," showing Voltaire in bed, and the picture of the Calas family hanging above; "Voltaire promising his Support to the Calas Family;" and "The Triumph of Voltaire."

The most important publication which these events elicited was a work by Voltaire himself, entitled "A Treatise upon Tolerance," a volume of more than two hundred pages, written during one of the long periods of the law's delay. In this book he gathered and stored the facts and lessons of the case for the admonition of men; and but for this book the case would soon have been swept into oblivion by the torrent of events. In this treatise it was preserved, and will remain accessible to future generations. Let no one cherish the delusion that such a plea for charity and tolerance will never again be needed. In the month of January, 1880, one hundred and seventeen years after the "Treatise upon Tolerance" was written, the newspapers brought us an account of Mahomedans near Gibraltar covering an aged Jew with kerosene and burning him to death, and reported to us the lectures of a Christian, in which men of another belief were denounced with a ferocity which Philip II. of Spain would have applauded in the Duke of Alva.

Voltaire opened his work with an account of the trial and execution of Jean Calas, written with the elegance, moderation, and force of his "Charles XII." It is a masterpiece of calm and lucid statement. Then he proceeded to discourse upon the lessons taught by those sad and terrible events. One remark was this: "People in Languedoc have religion enough to hate and persecute, but not enough to love and succor." He showed that it was the zeal for *dogma* which had done this fell deed, — the claim to expound the universe by authority. He reviewed the history of the world for proofs that man has never been so cruel as when he has waged war for

conscience' sake. He dwelt much upon the *safeness* of toleration: "Cast your eyes upon the other hemisphere. See Carolina, of which the wise Locke was law-giver; where seven fathers of families suffice to establish a mode of public worship approved by law, — a liberty which has given rise to no disorder." The toleration of all religions by the Greeks and Romans was adduced; China, India, and other Asiatic nations furnished examples. He came at length to speak of the absurd contrast between the intolerant religion of France and its tolerant politics. The first edition of this powerful and pathetic plea concluded with a prayer:—

"May those who light candles at high noon to celebrate thy worship tolerate those who are content with the light of thy sun. May those who cover their garments with white linen when they say that God ought to be loved not hold in detestation those who say the same thing in a mantle of black wool. May it be held equal to adore thee in a jargon formed of an ancient tongue, or in a jargon of more recent origin. May those whose coat has been dyed red or violet, who dominate over a little portion of a little lump of the dirt of this world, and who possess some rounded fragments of a certain metal enjoy without pride what they call grandeur and riches, and may others behold them without envy; for thou knowest that there is not in these vanities anything really enjoyable, nor anything worthy to swell with pride a human heart.

"May all men remember that they are brothers! May they hold in horror the tyranny exercised over souls! May they look with execration upon the brigandage which ravishes by force the fruits of labor and peaceful industry! If the scourge of war is unavoidable, let us not hate one another, let us not tear one another to pieces, in time of peace; and let us employ the moment of our existence in blessing equally, in a thousand different languages, from Siam to California, thy bounty which has given us that moment."

CHAPTER XXXII.

FERNEY A REFUGE FOR THE OPPRESSED.

The natural reward of a good action is opportunity to do others of the same kind. We have seen that the adoption and happy marriage of Marie Corneille brought to light many young Corneilles and Racines, willing to be provided for on similar terms. The rescue of Madame Calas and her children from want and infamy exalted Ferney into a refuge for the victims of popular prejudice and defective laws. A poet's grandsons have no just claim to exemption from the common lot of mortals, and Voltaire could elude their importunities with a jest. It was otherwise with the people who now besought his help. We can say of him that he did not once turn a fatigued or impatient ear to his countrymen ruined by means similar to those which blasted the family of Calas.

He soon discovered that the methods of justice in France were so defective that no man was safe who had a resolute and adroit accuser. There was no trial by jury; and, in capital cases, one more than a majority of numerous judges sufficed to doom the accused to torture and death. Hearsay testimony was admitted without adequate precautions; and, in all matters relating to religion, there was an amount of susceptible prejudice in the people that made fair investigation impossible. It was like performing electrical experiments with gunpowder lying about.

The patience, the skill, the tender, generous compassion, with which Voltaire labored, first, for the restoration of ruined families, and, afterwards, for the reform of the criminal procedure which had unjustly condemned them, has never been equaled since man first became capable of pitying his fellow. In doing this high and great duty, he ennobled and purified himself; his later letters exhibit to us a better and broader man than those of his earlier years. The time will come

when the twenty volumes of the writings of his old age will furnish texts, chapters, volumes, for the nourishment of humane principles in young and old. The lesson they teach is that injustice to any man wrongs and imperils every man, and that we should all feel it as if it had been dealt to ourselves. With the utmost convenient brevity I will mention a few of the instances of his interference on behalf of those who came to implore the aid of the saviour of Madame Calas and her children.

THE SIRVEN FAMILY.

M. Sirven was a professional *feudiste* (that is, a person learned in fiefs and feudal tenures) of Castres, in Languedoc, a day's ride from Toulouse; his family consisting of wife and three daughters, one of whom was married. The housekeeper of the Bishop of Castres conceived the project of converting the youngest daughter to the Catholic religion, an undertaking which the laws favored in every way. A child of seven declaring a desire to become a Catholic could be taken away from its parents and consigned to a religious house. The bishop, approving the scheme, placed the girl in a convent of Black Ladies, as they were popularly called, — nuns under the charge of the Jesuits. Either the discipline was too severe, or the girl was disposed to insanity; for she returned to her parents out of her mind, her body covered with the marks of the convent whip. Her mania increased, until in January, 1762, she secretly left her father's house, and could not be found. Several days after, while her father was at a château of the province, engaged in professional labors, some children discovered her body at the bottom of a well, three miles from her home.

This occurred at the time when the whole province was frenzied with the affair of the Calas family, then in prison, awaiting execution. At once the cry arose, "Is it not evident that Protestants are sworn to massacre any of their children who embrace the Roman and Apostolic religion?" Testimony springs out of the earth at such a time, in such a place. The authorities acted with fervent promptitude, and the Sirvens fled in terror toward Switzerland. No Protestant could hope for justice then in Languedoc, and, doubtless, they escaped the fate of the Calas family only by instantaneous flight.

They were summoned to appear and answer the charge of murdering the girl. Their failure to obey was deemed a confession of guilt; they were all pronounced guilty, and the parents were sentenced to die by the hangman. The daughters were condemned to remain under the gallows during the execution of their mother, to be conducted thence beyond the boundary line of the province by the executioner, and were forbidden to return, on pain of death. The estate of the family was confiscated.

Through the snows and icy winds of a severe winter the Sirvens pursued their anxious journey toward the Alps, and through the Alps, by the less frequented roads, to Geneva. The married daughter gave premature birth to a child among the mountains, and soon after the mother of the family died of fright and despair. The father found himself a stranger in a strange land, with his two daughters, without property, and acquainted only with a profession that was not available in the little republic of Geneva. As yet, Voltaire had not heard of the madness raging in the south of France, and the Sirvens knew nothing of him except from his fame in literature. It was not until the next year, when the first great step had been won toward the restoration of the Calas family, that they went to Ferney and related to him the story of their ruin and exile. He took up their case with as fresh and prompt a zeal as though it were the first instance of the kind he had ever heard of.

How can I compress into a few lines the volumes of letters, pamphlets, pleas, articles, which he wrote or caused to be written on the Sirvens? For nine years he labored for the reversal of their condemnation with the energy of personal interest and the tact of the experienced advocate. If money was needed, he gave it, or asked one of his monarchs to give it; if a pamphlet was required, he wrote it; if a lawyer, he employed him. Other men tire when an affair in which they have no personal concern draws out from months to years; but he, after several years of frustration and delay, was as alert and resolute as ever. "This business," he wrote to D'Argental, in the fourth year of the struggle, "agitates all my soul; tragedies, comedies, the *tripod*, are no longer anything to me. Time goes too slowly; I wish the Mémoire of

Elie de Beaumont was already published, and all Europe ringing with it. I would send it to the Mufti and to the Grand Turk, if they knew French. The blows aimed at fanaticism ought to penetrate from one end of the world to the other."

Such zeal is contagious, and subscriptions came in freely for the Sirvens, even from remote parts of Europe. Frederic of Prussia, who was then at peace with his other enemies, won over Voltaire also, at last, by sending five hundred francs for the Sirven family. I think the uncle of Madame Denis forgave him Frankfort and Freytag for that one act, and remembered them against him no more. Voltaire had now another ally and subscriber among the potentates of the earth: Catherine II., Empress of Russia, then beginning her illustrious reign. She had no sooner come to the throne, in 1762, than she turned for sympathy and light to the author who had formed her mind. If ever a woman of thirty-three needed sympathy and light, it was she, alone in that wide waste of empire.

Next to Frederic II. of Prussia, the most renowned monarch of her time was Catherine II. of Russia, whom the Russian people to this day regard as the true successor of Peter the Great. She had not a drop of Russian blood in her veins. The daughter of a poor German prince, a major-general in the Prussian army, she passed a part of her childhood at Frederic's court, a lively, robust, and well-behaved girl. It was Frederic who gave her to Peter, whom the Empress Elizabeth had adopted as heir to the Russian throne. There has seldom been a more incongruous union, even in royal houses. She was a young lady of sprightly wit and intelligent curiosity; he was incapable of any but sensual pleasures. She owed much to Voltaire during the dreary and troublous years preceding the death of Elizabeth. She wrote to him once in such words as these: —

"Since the year 1746, when I became mistress of my own time, I have been under the greatest obligations to you. Before that period I read nothing but romances; but by chance your works fell into my hands, and ever since I have not ceased to read them, and I have desired no books which were not as well written as yours, or as instructive. But where can I find such? I return continually to the creator of my taste,

as to my dearest amusement. Assuredly, monsieur, if I have any knowledge, it is to you that I owe it. I am reading at present your 'Essay upon General History,' and I should like to learn every page of it by heart."

Nothing can be more evident than that she began her reign with intentions as virtuous and elevated as those which had filled the mind of the youthful Frederic. She endeavored to carry out all the reformatory ideas of Voltaire. Besides simplifying the Russian code of laws, one of the first acts of her reign was to abolish torture. She introduced and sanctioned the practice of vaccination. She created the Russian Academy of Arts and Sciences, founded libraries and schools, and carried still further the principle of tolerance which the great Peter had begun to incorporate in the constitution of the empire. She became also a staunch and liberal ally in his endeavors to promote the same principle in France.

She responded handsomely to his application on behalf of the Sirven family. "I confess to you," she wrote, "that I should prefer my letter of exchange to remain a secret. If, nevertheless, you think that my name, little harmonious as it is, may be of some service to those victims of the persecuting spirit, I submit the matter to your discretion, and you will use my name, provided only that it shall do them no harm."

She told him also that the principle of tolerance was part of the fundamental law of the empire, and that no one in Russia could be lawfully molested for opinion's sake. "We have, it is true," she added, "some fanatics among us, who, in default of persecution, burn themselves, and if those of other countries were to do as much no great harm would come of it; the world would be more tranquil, and Calas would not have died upon the wheel."

In her hatred of *l'Infâme* she was a woman after Voltaire's own heart, and he lent a very willing ear to Russian gentlemen who assured him, upon their own knowledge, that she was innocent of the murder of her drunken husband. Readers are aware that she signified to Europe her sense of the value of the Encyclopædia by bestowing leisure and independence upon Diderot, the editor of the work. Hearing that his poverty compelled him to offer his library for sale, she bought it, but allowed him to keep it at his own house, gave him a salary of

a thousand francs a year for taking care of it for her, and paid his salary fifty years in advance.[1]

But the Sirvens were still in suspense. Ten years passed before they were restored to their rights, and, in part, compensated for their losses. They had been tried and condemned, as Voltaire remarked, in "two hours" of January, 1762; it was in January, 1772, that he announced the complete success of his endeavors in their behalf. He wrote thus to Madame du Voisin, the married daughter of Madame Calas, January 15, 1772: —

"This letter, madame, will be for you, for M. du Voisin, and for madame your mother. The Sirven family assembled at my house yesterday, shedding tears of joy. The new parliament of Toulouse has condemned the previous judges to pay all the costs of the criminal prosecution, a measure almost unexampled. I regard this decision, which I have at last obtained with so much trouble, as an *amende honorable*. The family have been wanderers for ten whole years. It is, like your own family, a memorable example of the atrocious injustice of men. May Madame Calas, as well as her children, enjoy all their lives a happiness as great as their misfortunes were cruel! May your lives be extended beyond the ordinary limits, and when an entire century shall have passed may it be said, 'Behold this worthy family that has lasted so long to be the condemnation of a parliament which has ceased to be!' Such are the wishes for it of an old man who is going very soon to leave this world."

The vindication of the Sirvens was even more complete than that of the Calas family, since the reversal of judgment came from Toulouse itself, where the wrong had been committed ten years before. As usual, Voltaire distributed compliments among those who had assisted him to win this signal though tardy triumph. He did more. We see him bestirring himself for the promotion of Damilaville, and for the exculpation of the Empress Catherine, whose good name needed a little attention on the part of her friends.

"I have another favor to ask you [he wrote to D'Argental]; it is for my Catherine. It is necessary to establish her reputation in Paris among worthy people. I have strong reasons for believing that Messieurs the Dukes of Praslin and Choiseul do not regard her as the woman in the world who is the most scrupulous. Nevertheless, I

[1] Diderot and the Encyclopædists. By John Morley. Page 195.

know, as well as one can know, that she had no part in the death of that drunkard of a husband of hers. A great devil of an officer of the guards, Préobazinsky, in taking him prisoner, gave him a horrible blow with his fist, which made him vomit blood. He thought to cure himself by drinking continually of punch in prison, and he died in that pleasing exercise. He was, besides, the greatest fool that ever occupied a throne. . . . . We are under obligations to her for having had the courage to dethrone her husband, for she reigns with wisdom and with glory ; and we ought to bless a crowned head who makes toleration universal through one hundred and thirty-five degrees of longitude. You have not, you others, more than eight or nine degrees, and yet you are not tolerant. Say, then, much good of Catherine, I pray you, and create for her a good reputation at Paris."

THE ESPINASSE FAMILY.

Jean-Pierre Espinasse was a Protestant gentleman, of good estate, living in the province of Languedoc. In 1740, he received into his house a Protestant clergyman, to whom he gave supper and lodging. For this violation of law he was condemned to the galleys for life, and his estate was confiscated, except that one third was reserved for the support of his children. He served twenty-three years in the galleys. During part of that period, his wife lived in Switzerland, at Lausanne, supported at the public expense. In 1763, through Voltaire's exertions, he was released, and came to Switzerland, to find his wife a pauper and his three children destitute. This family, too, joined the throng crowding about Ferney for the reversal of unjust judgments ; and Voltaire freely gave them the aid of his influence and talents. We see him writing long, ingenious, pathetic letters to the Duke of Nivernais, the Duke of Richelieu, and others, imploring them to intercede with the bigoted chancellor for the restoration of their estate. In 1766, after three years of solicitation, he had a measure of success, the family being allowed a portion of the revenue of their property. Probably he did not rest content ; but at this point the name disappears from the memorials of the time.

"You will ask me," wrote Voltaire to Richelieu, in 1766, "why I am always pestering you about the Huguenots. It is because, every day, I see those unfortunate people ; it is because I see families broken up and without bread ; it is because a hundred people come to my house to implore and weep, and because it is impossible not to be moved by them."

Languedoc, we observe by this affair, was more than eighty years behind New England in getting *l'Infâme* under subjection. It was about the year 1659 that Thomas Macey, of Massachusetts, was fined for not instantly driving out into the rain two way-worn Quakers who, in his absence, had sought shelter in his house from a storm. He was fined only thirty shillings for this offense; but he was so wounded by it that he removed to Nantucket, its first white settler, preferring to cast in his lot with the Indians of that sea-beaten island.[1]

GENERAL LALLY.

It was not *l'Infâme* that wronged the Count of Lally, the brave, unfortunate commander of the French forces in India during the Seven Years' War. The methods of justice were in fault, — the criminal system that rated prejudiced and hearsay testimony as of equal weight with that of competent eyewitnesses. Never was a scarred veteran more foully treated by the country he had served than General Lally.

He was a son of Sir Gerard Lally, an Irish gentleman, who followed the fortunes of the Stuarts, and settled in France when they found refuge there under Louis XIV. He was a soldier from his childhood. At eight years he was with his father at the siege of a town; at twelve, through the favor of the Regent, he was a captain by rank, and actually served as such in his father's regiment. He rose to a colonelcy during the first half of the reign of Louis XV., and at the battle of Fontenoy he distinguished himself in sight of the king, and was soon after raised to the rank of lieutenant-general, decorated with the *grand cordon* of Saint-Louis, and sent to India to take command of the French forces and interests in that country.

Lally possessed three traits of his Irish ancestors: impetuous valor, an ill-governed tongue, and a burning hatred of the English. For many years he had been the soul of the Irish band in France who plotted for the restoration of the Stuarts, and in India he said, "All my policy is in these five words: *No more English in India!*" But he could not, with the means at his command, carry out that simple and neatly de-

[1] The New Puritan, or New England Two Hundred Years Ago, by James S. Pike. New York, 1879. Page 54.

fined scheme. Clive had been fifteen years in India when Lally took command, and he had conquered for his countrymen such a footing there that no power then existing in the world could have dislodged them. Their fleet, their guineas, their men, their knowledge of the country, made up a force which frustrated the French general, and France saw her dream of an Indian empire resolve itself into a ship-load of French prisoners on their way to England, among whom was the Count of Lally himself. In England the count was released on his parole, and returned to France to face a host of disappointed share-holders in the East India Company, and a country soured with the results of a war the most disastrous of that reign.

The English ministry had sought to appease a dissatisfied people by the sacrifice of Admiral Byng. The French government attempted to pacify France by the destruction of General Lally. He was accused of every crime of which he was signally incapable. He was charged with having brought home millions of francs' worth of diamonds, the price of treason; the fact was, he had spent in India the last rupee he could command in the public service. A clamor arose against him, and he demanded an investigation. Writing to the Duke of Choiseul, he said, "I bring here my head and my innocence; I await your orders." He was arrested, at length, and consigned to the Bastille, where he remained fifteen months, without being asked a question or informed of what he was accused. The ministry did not know what to do with him, nor how to try him, for he was charged with cowardice, peculation, robbery, and treason. The lamentable defects of the French criminal system were as manifest in this case as in the trial of Jean Calas. The indictment against him contained one hundred and sixty counts, of which the most serious was that he had sold Pondichéry to the English for money. A special court of fifteen members of the parliament of Paris tried him. The public prosecutor was that cruel, ingenious, indefatigable Pasquier, who had conducted the trial of crazy Damiens, and enjoyed a royal pension for his demoniac management of that case. Despite the absence of all direct testimony, and in the teeth of all probability, General Lally was doomed to die by the axe, ten of his fifteen judges consenting thereto. No kind

of fault was proved against him except some imprudences of language.

The manner of his execution was of unexampled atrocity. He was sixty-four years of age, a man of gray hairs, a lieutenant-general, six times wounded in the service of France. The king, prejudiced against him, shut himself up at Choisy, six miles from Paris, to avoid being solicited for his pardon, but gave orders that the sentence of decapitation should be executed in the least painful manner. It was agreed, in consequence, that he should be conveyed to the place of execution in the evening, in a close carriage, and that the officer accompanying him should be in plain clothes. But Pasquier, an unrelenting bigot, so vehemently objected to this mitigation of the penalty that a dispatch was sent to the king for further instructions. The king's reply was that the judges should do as they thought best.

"Then," says Dangerville, "the executioner took possession of his prey, and handcuffed him. Under the pretext that negroes had the art of strangling themselves with their tongues, a device which M. de Lally might have learned in his travels, he proposed to put a gag into his mouth. This suggestion was eagerly adopted by M. Pasquier, and so much the more because the gag would spare him the violent words which M. de Lally, in his fury, wished to let loose upon him. It was with such an appendage, and in the cart used for the vilest criminals, that M. de Lally was conveyed to the Grève (a public place in Paris), through an immense crowd, not only of common people and *bourgeois*, but of military men and courtiers also. At the foot of the scaffold his gag was removed. Many people expected to hear him harangue; but he recovered his self-possession, ascended quietly, and received the fatal stroke without uttering a word." [1]

The gag and the cart excited murmurs in the crowd, but the weight of public opinion was against the hapless general, and the emotion created by the manner of his execution was transient. General Lally was beheaded May 6, 1766.

Voltaire was following the long trial with much interest, when he was startled by its tragic termination, which he was far from expecting. In earlier years, when he was speculating

[1] Vie Privée de Louis XV., par Dangerville. Quoted in 8 Barbier, 416.

in India merchandise, he had often met the Count of Lally at the Duke of Richelieu's, and may even have been associated with him in promoting the French East India Company. His impression was strong that the general was another victim of the savage ingenuity of Pasquier. D'Alembert wrote to him soon after: "Do you know, my dear master, a certain M. Pasquier, counselor to the court, who has big eyes and is a great talker? They say of him that his head resembles a calf's head, the tongue of which is good to grill." Voltaire replied, "Yes, indeed, I know him, — that snout of ox and heart of tiger!"

He knew him very well indeed, and, knowing him, he began to collect documents relating to General Lally, often reminding his Paris familiars of the incompleteness of his collection. It was not easy then to get copies of depositions and examinations. Time passed, — months, years; and still the blood of the murdered man was unavenged, and the honor of a patriotic family was not vindicated. Voltaire, it is true, in his "History of the Reign of Louis XV.," exculpated General Lally, and described his trial and execution in becoming terms; but, in France, nothing is held to remove the stigma of an unjust condemnation except its reversal in form by a competent court.

Lally left a son, a school-boy of fifteen, who knew not the name of his father until the last day of that father's life. He had never borne his father's name. He wrote once, "I only learned the name of my mother four years after I had lost her, and that of my father but one day before losing him. I ran to bear him my first homage and my eternal adieu. I ran in vain. The moment had been anticipated; I did not find my father; I only saw the trace of his blood." To this son General Lally had confided the task of vindicating his memory; and, from that day, the boy devoted himself to its performance. At twenty-two he sent his first Mémoire to Voltaire, who gave him the sage advice of a man long practiced in the art of rehabilitation. He told him what not to do, whom not to offend, what interests to conciliate, what persons to appease. "For my own part," he added, "I offer to be your secretary, despite my age." Under the title of "Historical Fragments upon India," Voltaire wrote a volume of three hundred pages, in which the whole history of French enterprises in India was related in the most interesting manner, including a full ac-

count of the campaigns and disasters, the life, trial, and execution, of General Lally. This volume was published in 1773, and it prepared the way for a reversal of the unjust judgment.

The usual delays ensued. Meanwhile, Voltaire did not disdain to make the most of the favor of Madame Dubarry, the king's last mistress, without whose approval not one step could have been taken. Doubtless, it was through her that the young man obtained a commission in the royal musketeers, as well as a portion of his father's confiscated estate. We leave him here, in 1773, a captain in the king's service, assailing all ears and eyes with Mémoires and factums on behalf of his father. Under the *régime* of that period, this little epistle of Voltaire to the extravagant, good-natured Dubarry was worth a hundred eloquent pleas:—

"Madame, M. de la Borde has told me that you ordered him to kiss me for you on both cheeks.

Quoi! deux baisers sur la fin de ma vie!
Quelle passe-port vous daignez m'envoyer!
Deux! c'est trop d'un, adorable Egérie;
Je serais mort de plaisir au premier. [1]

"He has shown me your portrait; you are not offended, madame, if I have taken the liberty to pay back to it the two kisses.

Vous ne pouvez empêcher cet hommage,
Faible tribut de quiconque a des yeux.
C'est aux mortels d'adorer votre image;
L'original était fait pour les dieux. [2]

"I have heard several *morceaux* from the 'Pandore' of M. de la Borde; they seemed to me worthy of your protection. Favor bestowed upon the veritable fine arts is the only thing which can augment the *éclat* with which you shine.

"Deign to accept, madame, the profound respect of an old hermit, whose heart has scarcely any sentiment left except gratitude."

This in 1773. It was the last year of the Dubarry's reign;

[1] What! two kisses at the end of my life! What a passport you deign to send me! Two! It is one too many, adorable Egeria; I should be dead of pleasure at the first.

[2] You cannot prevent this homage, a feeble tribute from whomsoever has eyes. It is for mortals to adore your image; the original was made for the gods.

else, the son of General Lally might have sooner vindicated his father's memory. Her power was at times all but absolute. She exiled in 1770 the prime minister, the Duke of Choiseul, whom her predecessor had created and sustained. She at least began the eminent fortune of the son of General Lally, who became in the next reign a marquis and peer, and was known in the public life of his country until 1830.

THE CHEVALIER DE LA BARRE.

The scene of the events now to be related was Abbeville, a small city of the north of France, on the navigable river Somme, twelve miles from the English Channel. There was a convent there, the abbess of which was a lady of distinguished family, a highly agreeable and attractive woman. A magistrate of the vicinity, Duval by name, a man sixty years of age, much employed in the business affairs of the convent, fell in love with her, and pressed his suit with offensive importunity. The abbess sent for her nephew, Chevalier de la Barre, to come and live in the town, promising to use her influence in procuring for him the object of his ambition, a commission in a regiment of cavalry. He was the son of a lieutenant-general who had squandered a large estate, and he looked to his aunt for the influence which alone could advance him in the military profession.

The abbess often invited him and his companions to supper, to the exclusion of Duval, who conceived a violent animosity against the young man; and he, on his part, treated the elderly magistrate with aggravating *hauteur*. La Barre was twenty years of age, ill-instructed, a reader of scandalous books, but by no means of a perverse or depraved character. He was, simply, a very young French gentleman of that period; neither worse nor better than many others.

It was a bad time for young men of family and education, who, above all others, need the restraints and the inspirations of a true religion. For them the old religion was a dead thing; they saw the brightest spirits of the age pelting its ghastly and sumptuous corpse; and there was, as yet, no hint or hope of one which could assist them to control their propensities and ennoble their purposes.

On a certain night in August, 1765, a foolish deed was done

in Abbeville that filled the region round about with horror and consternation. A wooden crucifix which stood upon an old bridge over the Somme was hacked with a knife in many places, and in such a way as to permit no doubt that the mutilation was done purposely. On the same night a crucifix in one of the cemeteries of the city was covered with mud. Upon the discovery of these injuries, the people were thrown into the same kind of affright as that which used to seize the people of ancient Athens when an image of Minerva was supposed to have been profaned, and the goddess made angry with her own beloved city. The bishop of the diocese inflamed the general excitement. An austere and zealous prelate, he arranged a solemn procession to avert the anger of heaven from Abbeville. The bishop himself, with bare feet and a cord round his neck, marched at its head, and, kneeling before the image, he invoked mercy upon those who had profaned it, — men, he said, who were not beyond the reach of heavenly mercy, though they had "rendered themselves worthy of the severest punishments known to this world's law." An indulgence of forty days was granted to all of either sex who should visit the injured crucifix, now transported to the principal church of the city. That church was filled all day with worshipers. Processions of various orders and societies were seen every hour going toward it, chanting psalms as they went. The religious fervor of the people was by these expedients excited to the highest degree; and that species of fervor is closely akin to the direst cruelty.

One of those terrible *monitoires* was read in all the churches, threatening vague perdition against all persons having knowledge of the matter, "whether by hearsay or otherwise," who should fail to declare it. The usual mad rumors ran from circle to circle: a new sect had been formed, sworn to break all images and tread the sacrament under foot; the Jews were at their old familiar work of profaning Christian emblems.

Then it was that Duval, blinded by jealous hate, pointed to the Chevalier de la Barre as the probable perpetrator of the "sacrilege;" and, in his character of magistrate, he inquired into all the past life of the young man, questioning valets, servants, workmen. He discovered no proof, and none was ever discovered, that La Barre had defaced the crucifix

on the bridge. He learned that the young man and two of his companions had once passed within thirty yards of a procession bearing the sacrament without taking off their hats. La Barre confessed as much, and attributed the omission to his being too late for dinner. Duval also ascertained that these young roysterers had been in the habit of singing loose ditties and chanting Rabelaisian litanies; particularly, a certain song written by Piron in his youth, and known to most young men of that period. Armed with such testimony as this, the infuriate Duval formally denounced the chevalier, which compelled the magistrates of Abbeville to investigate the charge.

A crowd of witnesses (seventy-seven in all) came forward to testify. Half a dozen young men of Abbeville were accused of singing the objectionable songs and uttering the burlesque litanies. One of them was Duval's own son, who took to flight, as did others of the accused. The rooms of La Barre, D'Etallonde, and the rest were searched. Among their books were found several light novels of the day; also, one of Voltaire's deistical poems, the "Epistle to Uranie," and the two little volumes, just published, of the "Philosophical Dictionary," — works to be found in thousands of rooms, all over Europe. Duval pushed on the prosecution with all the fury of a David of Toulouse, encouraged, as he was, by the applause of all priests and many people. Fortunately, D'Etallonde escaped in time, and reached the dominions of the King of Prussia, where, having spent all his money, and being in danger of starvation, he enlisted as a soldier in a regiment posted at Vesel. Another of the accused, a lad of fifteen, saved himself by confessing that he and his young friends had indeed sung the songs, said the litanies, and bowed in mock homage to the books.

La Barre alone was a prisoner; but D'Etallonde was condemned and sentenced, as though he, too, had been in the power of the court. He was but eighteen years of age; La Barre was scarcely twenty. The crimes of which they were found guilty were thus described by the court: "Wickedly, and from impiety, passing with deliberate steps before the holy sacrament without taking off the hat or kneeling; uttering blasphemies against God, the holy eucharist, the holy virgin,

the religion and commandments of God and of the church; singing two songs filled with execrable and abominable blasphemies against God, the holy eucharist, the holy virgin, and the saints, male and female; rendering marks of adoration and respect to infamous books; profaning the sign of the cross, the mystery of the consecration of the wine, and the benedictions in use in churches and among Christians."

These were the offenses of the young men. Thousands of merry priests had committed the same, when they read and laughed over their much-loved Rabelais; and thousands of French ladies, also, when they copied the light verses of the time into their diaries, and read them aloud to their companions at supper. La Barre, present, and D'Etallonde, absent, were condemned to be subjected to the torture, ordinary and extraordinary, to extort the names of their "accomplices;" to have their tongues torn out by the roots with pincers of iron; to have their right hands cut off at the door of the principal church of Abbeville; to be drawn in a cart to the market-place, and there, having been bound to stakes by iron chains, to be burned to death by a slow fire. In consideration of La Barre's presence, the sentence was mitigated in his case so far that he was allowed to be beheaded before being burned. The court further ordered that some of the books found in their rooms, particularly the "Philosophical Dictionary," should be cast into the fire with their bodies, and consumed with them.

No rational being seems to have thought, at the time, that this hideous sentence would be carried into effect. Extraordinary efforts were made to save a life so young and so innocent. An appeal was taken. Ten of the first advocates of Paris joined in a declaration that, in their opinion, the sentence was illegal. The prisoner was removed to Paris, where the case was examined by a court of twenty-five judges, fifteen of whom voted to confirm the sentence; and the young man was sent back to Abbeville, followed by five executioners, supposed to be competent to execute it.

He bore the long, unspeakable anguish of the fatal day with a fortitude that is absolutely without parallel. The confessor who was assigned him was an old friend of his aunt, the abbess, often her guest, with whom the chevalier had merrily supped many a time at the convent. He dined with this priest

before his torments began. "Let us," said the prisoner, "take a little nourishment; you will have need of strength, as much as I, to bear the spectacle I am going to give." He could even jest. At the close of the meal he said, "Let us have some coffee; it will not prevent my sleeping." The executioners themselves proved unequal to the task they had undertaken, and only pretended to tear out his tongue. At the scaffold, therefore, he was still able to speak. Just before mounting it, he quietly said to the priest, "I did not believe a young gentleman could be put to death for so little a thing." One of the executioners came forward to cut his hair. "Why," said the prisoner, "do you wish to make me look like a choir boy?" The executioner from Paris, who was to give the final stroke of the axe, then presented himself. "Are your arms strong?" said La Barre. "Was it not you who cut off the head of the Count of Lally?" "Yes, monsieur," replied the man. "You missed, did you not?" "He was in a bad position," said the executioner. "Place yourself properly, and I will not fail you." "Fear nothing," said the prisoner. "I will place myself aright, and not play the baby." He laid his head upon the block, and again spoke with the most perfect serenity: "Is that right?" The executioner did his work with such dexterity that he was rewarded by a general clapping of hands.

Thus perished, July 1, 1766, almost within sight of the white cliffs of humane England, this heroic youth, to the horror of what was called "all France;" that is, to the horror of the few thousands of people who, by sharing the intellectual life of France, had escaped the domination of *l'Infâme*.

No event of his whole life-time so deeply moved Voltaire as this execution. He was ready to abandon his country. When the news reached Ferney that, in spite of the argument of the ten advocates, the fell sentence had been carried into effect, he was incoherent with rage, alarm, amazement, and compassion. He dashed upon paper, July 16, 1766, a wild letter to the D'Argentals, imploring further information: —

"I throw myself at your noses, at your feet, at your wings, my divine angels. I ask you in mercy to tell me if there is nothing new. I entreat you to send me the opinion of the advocates; it is a monument of generosity, firmness, and wisdom, of which, also, I have very

urgent need. If you have only one copy, which you do not wish to lose, I will have it transcribed, and instantly send it back to you. The atrocity of this affair seizes me with horror and wrath. I repent having ruined myself in building and doing good within the boundaries of a country where barbarities are committed in cold blood and in going to dinner, which would make drunken savages shudder. And this is a people so gentle, so light, and so gay! Man-devouring harlequins! I wish no more to hear you spoken of. Run from the stake to a ball, and from the place of execution to the comic opera; break Calas upon the wheel; hang Sirven; burn five poor young men, who, as my angels say, ought only to have been put six months in St. Lazarus. I cannot breathe the same air as you! My angels, I conjure you once more to tell me all you know. The Inquisition is insipid in comparison with your Jansenists of the Grand-Chamber and the Tournelle. There is no law whatever which orders horrors like these in such a case; only the devil could be capable of burning men in the teeth of the law. What! the caprice of five old fools shall suffice to inflict penalties which would have made Busiris tremble? I stop, for I should say much more. I have already said too much of demons; I wish only to love my angels."

As more exact information reached him, his indignation increased. He wondered that, in the presence of such horrors, the gay and brilliant life of Paris could continue. His countrymen, he said, were monkeys, who could at any moment become tigers. He formed the serious design of abandoning France, and founding a colony of philosophers in the dominions of the King of Prussia; whence, with their own printing-press, they would inundate the universe with works against *l'Infâme*. July 21st he wrote to Damilaville, who had urged him not to allow this terrible event to prey upon his health: —

"I do not permit myself to be cast down; but my grief, my anger, and my indignation redouble every instant. So far am I from yielding that I shall probably adopt the resolution of going to finish my days in a country where I shall be able to do some good. I shall not be alone. It may be that the reign of reason and true religion will be immediately established, and silence iniquity and falsehood. I am persuaded that the prince who will favor this enterprise would procure for you an agreeable destiny, if you were willing to be one of the company. A letter from Protagoras [D'Alembert] would serve you much in that quarter. I know that you have courage enough to follow me; but you have probably some ties which you will not be able to break.

Already I have begun to take measures; if you second me, I shall not hesitate. Meanwhile, I conjure you to take at least, at the office of M. de Beaumont, the outline of the decision, with the names of the judges. I have seen no one who does not go into a fury at the recital of that abomination. My dear brother, how wicked are men, and what need I have to see you!"

Other letters attest the reality of the scheme of founding the colony. The King of Prussia gave it cautious encouragement. "You speak to me," wrote the king, August 7, 1766, "of a colony of philosophers who propose to establish themselves at Clèves. I do not oppose the project; I can accord them all that they ask, except, perhaps, wood, which the sojourn of their countrymen [during the late war] almost entirely destroyed in those forests. Nevertheless, this will be on condition that they restrain those who ought to be restrained, and that they will observe decency in their publications. . . . . May Heaven or destiny get this tragedy out of your head, and may you enlighten agreeably and peaceably the age which you render illustrious! If you come to Clèves, I shall have again the pleasure of seeing you, and of assuring you of the admiration which your genius has always inspired in me."

The king also offered him a house near Clèves. The plan of expatriation was not carried out, for the simple reason that none of "the brethren" were willing or able to follow him into exile. "M. de Voltaire," says Wagnière, "proposed to several poor men of letters to go with him thither, but none of them were willing. His intention was to form at Clèves a kind of society of philosophers agreeing with him in opinion; that is to say, of pure deists."

Not the less did he exert himself to undo a portion of the mischief which had been done against the laws of France by the ministers of the law. He wrote immediately one of his little pamphlets, entitled "Narrative of the Death of the Chevalier de la Barre," a simple, graphic account of the matter, which no one could resist. In 1775, at the beginning of the next reign, he followed this with one still more powerful and affecting, addressed to the young King Louis XVI., called the "Cry of Innocent Blood," in which he gave an outline of the hearsay testimony upon which the young man had been

condemned. The object of this was to procure a formal reversal of the abominable judgment.

Meanwhile, the youthful D'Etallonde, a young man of education and singular refinement, was shouldering a musket in a Prussian regiment, without hope of a happier destiny. When he had served some months, Voltaire was so fortunate as to discover his whereabouts from a Prussian officer who visited him at Ferney. January 13, 1767, he wrote to the young soldier the following letter: —

"A man who has been sensibly touched by your misfortunes, monsieur, and who is still penetrated with horror at the cruel fate of one of your friends, infinitely desires to be of service to you. Have the goodness to give information as to what vocation you feel yourself best suited; whether you speak German; if your handwriting is good; if you would like a situation at the court of some prince of Germany, or with some lord, as reader, secretary, librarian; whether you are still engaged in the service of his majesty the King of Prussia; whether you wish that your discharge should be asked of him; and whether you can be recommended to him as a man of letters. In the latter case, he would have to be informed of your name, your age, and your misfortune. He would be touched by it; he detests barbarians; he thinks your condemnation abominable.

"Do not inquire who writes to you, but write a long detail to Geneva, to M. Misopriest, care of M. Souchai, cloth merchant, at the Golden Lion. Have the goodness to say to M. Haas, at whose house you lodge, that he shall be reimbursed the postage of all the letters which will be sent to you under cover.

"Also, monsieur, will you be pleased to inform us how much your father allows you per annum, and if you receive pay at Vesel? Nothing more can be said to you at present, and your answer is waited for."

The young man promptly replied, transmitting the information requested with modesty, intelligence, and grace. Voltaire sent his answer to the King of Prussia, and wrote again to D'Etallonde, giving him good hopes of a better lot.

"The King of Prussia," he wrote, "knows that you are only guilty of having inconsiderately mocked a superstition which all men of sense detest from the bottom of their hearts. You laughed at the grimaces of monkeys in the country of monkeys, and the monkeys tore you. . . . . My first intention was to place you in an establishment which was projected at

Clèves. But this scheme encountered obstacles; it has been deranged; and the goodness of the king whom you serve appears to me at present a precious resource. He who writes to you desires passionately to be of service to you; and, if he could, he would make the barbarians repent who treated children with so much inhumanity."

All happened as he hoped it would. The King of Prussia gave the young man a commission in his service, and allowed him at once a long leave of absence, that he might visit Ferney. Voltaire sent him a sum of money to defray his traveling expenses, and gave him the welcome due to his sufferings and to his amiable disposition. He detained him at Ferney more than a year and a half, during which the young officer studied mathematics, fortification, surveying, drawing, and whatever else might fit him for a military career. "His good sense," wrote Voltaire, "his prudence, his assiduity in labor, and his extreme politeness gained him the hearts of all who lived at Ferney, and their number is not small." Wagnière bears similar testimony to the gentleness of his manners and the agreeableness of his person. Nine years after the awful scene at Abbeville, we find Voltaire still exerting himself to procure for the young man the inheritance of his confiscated property and the restoration of his civil rights.

Upon his final settlement in Prussia, with his new accomplishments, Frederic made him a captain of engineers, and added a pension to the pay of his rank, besides giving him those marks of personal regard which are of so much importance under absolute governments. He never, I believe, obtained the restoration of his rights as a French citizen. He could have had them, as it seems, in 1775, on condition of making a public confession of his fault, candle in hand, and asking pardon of the church upon his knees. He declined thus to degrade himself, and remained a subject of the Prussian king. Voltaire had the satisfaction of telling him, in 1775, that, among the events which inspired Turgot and his colleagues to reform the code and criminal procedure of France, none was more influential than the foul sentence pronounced at Abbeville in 1766, and executed upon his brave friend, the Chevalier de la Barre. It was through Captain d'Etallonde that the farmer of Ferney sent parcels of seeds to the King of

Prussia, such as enthusiastic agriculturists love to distribute among their friends for trial in other soils.

OTHER CASES.

I must not continue such narratives. In his correspondence of these years, there are allusions to several other instances of his persistent interference on behalf of the victims of popular prejudice and a bad code. The case of Montbailli and his wife, snuff-makers of Saint-Omer, a city in the north of France, was conspicuous among these. Montbailli's mother, a woman of enormous bulk from the excessive use of brandy, was found dead one morning in her room, which was next to the one occupied by him and his wife. It was a clear case of apoplexy. Nevertheless, a cry of "parricide" arose. The son and his wife were tried for the murder. It was shown that they had a pecuniary interest in prolonging her life, since with her died the license to manufacture snuff, their only means of subsistence. They were proved to be of amiable and gentle habits, fond of the culture of flowers, and patient with the violence of their drunken mother. On hearsay testimony of incredibly preposterous character, they were both found guilty of "parricide," and doomed to torture and the wheel. The execution of the young wife was postponed until after the birth of her child; but that of the husband, in all its hideous enormity, occurred at Saint-Omer, November 19, 1770. After the torture, ordinary and extraordinary, which he bore with heroic constancy, he was conveyed to the scaffold. At the great door of the cathedral, on the way, he confessed many faults, and added, with the solemnity of an oath, "I am innocent of the crime imputed to me." When his right hand was cut off, he added, "This hand is not guilty of parricide." As his bones were broken by the iron bar, he still declared his innocence, and when, as he was expiring, the priest urged him once more to confess, he said, "Why do you wish to force me to tell a lie? Do you take upon yourself the crime of it?"

The dullest imagination can form some slight idea of the situation of his young wife: alone in a dungeon; bereft of all good and all hope; expecting two periods of woful agony; then death. But her parents bestirred themselves. There

was one man in the world who could feel this giant wrong as though himself were suffering it. To him they appealed; and he to the Chancellor Maupeou, who granted him an extension of precious time. The case was examined anew; she was pronounced innocent, and borne back to Saint-Omer in triumph. "But," as Voltaire remarks pathetically in one of his pamphlets on this case, "her husband had died by the most horrible punishment, and his blood still cries for vengeance."

The case of Madame de Bombelles, in 1772, was one of curious enormity. The Viscount de Bombelles, an officer of the French army, discarded his wife on the ground that they had been married by the Protestant rite, she being of a Protestant family of Montauban. He married again, leaving his wife and child helpless. She claimed her rights. The court decided against her, pronounced her marriage void and her child illegitimate, condemned her to pay the costs of the suit, ordered that her child should be reared in the Catholic religion at the father's expense, and that she should be paid a sum of money as a woman betrayed and abandoned. In many an effective page, Voltaire exposed the iniquity of this transaction, and dwelt upon the infamy of the principle involved. It was *l'Infâme* that allowed this wrong. *Écrasez l'Infâme!*

From 1762 to the last hours of his life he never missed a chance to say to his countrymen, No Frenchman is safe from torture, death, and infamy, until we learn better the art of distinguishing truth from falsehood, and the *infinite* difference between "hearsay and otherwise." The absurdity of the whole system of torture he exposed in every light, and he created a general interest in criminal procedure which continues to bear fruit to the present day. Before he had been two years in the grave, the torture system was abolished in France, as it had previously been in the dominions of his pupils, Frederic II. of Prussia and Catherine II. of Russia.

In February, 1777, he read in the Gazette of Berne an anonymous advertisement, offering a prize of fifty louis d'or for the best outline of a criminal code, including a classification of crimes, the nature and force of proofs and presumptions, and the penalties affording the maximum of protection with the minimum of pain. He was eighty-three years of age then; but he responded to the call in his own way. He wrote

a pamphlet of a hundred and fifty pages on the subject, filled with hints, facts, suggestions, bearing upon it, and designed for the consideration of competitors. By way of preface, he copied the Berne advertisement, and appended to it, "Another Unknown, touched with the same zeal, adds fifty louis to the prize offered, and deposits them in the same hands (*Société Economique* of Berne), in order that the Society may either augment the prize, or give something to essays of less merit, according to its pleasure. We offer to those who shall compete our doubts upon a subject so important, in order that they may resolve them, if they deem them worthy of it."

After this modest introduction, he proceeds to point out the defects of the criminal systems of Europe, illustrating the same by facts and instances: as that of the pretty servant-girl, eighteen years old, recently hanged in France for stealing a dozen and a half of napkins from a mistress who owed her their value in wages; and that of the execution of English Dr. Dodd for forgery, instead of making him useful in Newfoundland, which needed workmen, or setting him to copying manuscripts. The chapter on Heresy was in his own vein. It ends with a noticeable passage: "The world is a little ameliorated, — yes, the thinking world; but the brute world will, for a long time to come, be composed of bears and monkeys, and the *canaille* will always be a hundred to one of the population. It is for that *canaille* that so many men, who despise it, compose their mien and disguise themselves. It is for the *canaille* that pompous ceremonies are presented; and for it alone that the punishment of a wretch is made a grand and superb spectacle."

The Salem witchcraft mania figured in his chapter upon Sorcerers, and his version of the facts may, perhaps, claim the distinction of being the least like the truth of any that has ever appeared in print.[1] Among ourselves, however, the facts are usually misstated, and generally exaggerated. In this and other chapters he prepared the way for the obliteration from criminal codes of all offenses arising from a difference of opin-

[1] "This infernal scene began in the little country of Salem [*petit pays de Salem*], like that of the capital of France, through a priest named Pâris, and by convulsions. This frenzied zealot imagined that all the inhabitants were possessed of the devil, and made them believe it. Half the people loaded the other half with chains, exorcised them, put them to the torture, a practice unknown in

ion. The loathsome and pestilential prisons of Europe did not escape his censure; he spoke of them as the illustrious Howard had been speaking of them in England for four years past, incited thereto by his own sufferings as a prisoner of war in French jails.

The good Howard occasionally visited Switzerland in those years, not unwilling to halt at Geneva among his brother Calvinists, but casting rueful glances toward Ferney, where lived the spoiler of their ancient simplicity. How cordially and blindly he detested Voltaire, though Voltaire was working in the same cause as himself, and had more in common with him, perhaps, than any other man in Europe! Writing in 1770 from that Abbeville where young La Barre perished in 1766, Howard says, "I returned to Geneva. There are some exemplary persons; yet the principles of one of the vilest men, Voltaire, with the corruptions of the French, who are within a mile of the city, has greatly debased its ancient purity and splendor." It was *l'Infâme* that made the good, illiterate Howard thus misconceive his fellow. Voltaire could have taught him much, but there was one thing, of first importance, which Howard could have taught Voltaire: not to call the heavy-laden, anxious masses of mankind *canaille*. Howard called them brethren, and once wrote in his diary these words, in harmony with which he acted always: —

"Let this maxim be a leading feature of my life: *Constantly to favor and relieve those that are lowest.*" [1]

England, and made to perish on the scaffold old men, women, and children, and were in turn themselves chained, exorcised, tortured, and put to death. The province became a desert; it was necessary to send thither new inhabitants. Nothing is more incredible, and nothing is more true." (Prix de la Justice et de l'Humanité. Article IX. 40 Œuvres de Voltaire, 320.)

[1] Memoirs of John Howard, by J. B. Brown. London, 1818. Page 460.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE LORD OF FERNEY COMMUNES.

After the marriage of Marie Corneille the inmates of Ferney were not assiduous in their attendance at the parish church, rebuilt by the lord of the manor. Madame Denis and the young lady, according to usage, confessed and communed at Easter in 1761. It was a beautiful spring day. The master, walking abroad to enjoy it in his park with his secretary, met and saluted the Capuchin monk who had confessed them. "Father," said he, "you have given many absolutions; will you not give one to me, also, who confess here, and before witnesses, that I do harm to no one, — at least, not knowingly?" The monk laughed, and said that that was well known both at Ferney and in the Capuchin convent. Voltaire put a six-franc piece in his hand, the common confession fee of the day, as it appears, which the Capuchin pocketed, and merrily went his way, saying that he hoped M. de Voltaire would continue his bounty to the Capuchins of Gex.

He did so. Some time after, he obtained from M. de Choiseul an annuity of six hundred francs a year for the convent, and, in return, the monks conferred upon him the title, by patent, of Temporal Father of the Capuchins of Gex, — a title of which he was wont to boast, — in his humorous manner.

There was, however, one priest who could not take him as a jest. This was the bishop of the diocese; a man, according to Voltaire, who was more fit to clean chimneys than to direct consciences. The lord of Ferney, perhaps, was not a fair judge of bishops. The Bishop of Anneci appears, in his letters, to have been simply a man of an intellect capable of believing what he preached. With him Voltaire came into collision in 1768, and the noise therefore was heard throughout Europe.

In the "Dictionnaire Philosophique," under the innocent

heading, "Grain" (*Blé ou Bled*), we are favored with some unexpected advice:—

"Distinguish always honest people who think from the populace that is not formed to think. If usage obliges you to perform a ridiculous ceremony for the sake of that *canaille*, and if on the road you meet some people of understanding, notify them by a sign of the head, by a look, that you think as they do; but it is not necessary to laugh. Weaken little by little all the ancient superstitions, and introduce no new ones. The laws ought to be for every one alike; but let each follow or reject, according to his pleasure, whatever is founded only upon indifferent usage. If the servant of Bayle dies in your arms, do not speak to her as you would to Bayle, nor to Bayle as to his servant. If imbeciles still wish to have acorns, let them eat acorns, but do not object to their being offered bread."

Upon this principle he was about to act once more, to the regret of some of his warmest friends, particularly of his guardian angels, the D'Argentals. At the beginning of 1768, there was, to use D'Alembert's expression, "an uproar" at Ferney. Some manuscripts of a perilous nature were missed by the master of the house, among others his Memoirs of Frederic, which no longer expressed his feeling toward that monarch. The theft was brought home to a guest, who enjoyed the special favor of Madame Denis. This lady could be made to endure country life only by a flow of company and a ceaseless round of amusements. Her uncle strove to provide her with both, and tried all his plays at their little theatre for her amusement. He was now past seventy, more devoted to labor than ever, the central figure in the intellectual world, the defender of injured innocence; and he bore with diminishing patience the exactions of a niece who had no other life than pleasure. According to Wagnière, there were violent quarrels between them on the discovery of the theft; Madame Denis hotly defending the accused. The subsequent events have been related by that faithful secretary, the only eye-witness of many of them, and we cannot do better than follow his interesting narrative. Wagnière did not like Madame Denis. He intimates that she led her too-indulgent uncle an uneasy life, and was much given to opposing his inclinations.

"On this occasion [he says] M. de Voltaire was quite out of patience with her, and, March 3, 1768, he sent her away, as well as the man whom she had defended. She went to Paris [for a while]. Seven other gentlemen, who then lodged in the house, perceiving, despite the extreme politeness of M. de Voltaire towards them, how much he needed repose and seclusion in the agitation and inquietude into which this event had thrown him, took leave one after the other. In a few days he was alone in the château, with me and his servants. The Sunday after, during mass, a theft was committed in a private house, near by. The seigneur of Ferney caused the suspected person to be brought into his presence, made him confess his crime, and obliged him to make restitution on the spot.

"During Holy Week, a monk having come to dine at the château, M. de Voltaire said to him, 'Father D——, I desire, for example's sake, to commune next Sunday; I think that you will willingly give absolution for that.' 'Very willingly,' replied the monk; 'I give it to you.' Nothing more was said. The priest ate, drank, and went his way.

"On Easter Sunday M. de Voltaire said to me, 'Now that I am alone and without hindrance, I wish, in my character of seigneur of the place, to go and commune at the parish church; will you go with me? I desire, also, to lecture a little those scoundrels who steal continually.' I replied to him that I should be very curious to see him commune; but that, as far as my knowledge went, being a Protestant, I did not believe that he had a right to speak in the church, and I begged him with the greatest earnestness to abstain from a proceeding which I thought dangerous for him. He refused me.

"I accompanied him to the church, walking behind a superb Blessed Loaf, which he was in the habit of giving every year on Easter Sunday. After the distribution of this bread, and after having communed, he began to speak to the congregation of the theft committed some days before, addressing to them vigorous, eloquent, and pathetic remonstrances, and exhorting them to the practice of virtue. Then the priest, who was near the balustrade, turned round abruptly, and made only one leap to the altar (showing much ill-humor), to continue the service. Our orator, perceiving this, addressed to the auditors some words complimentary to their pastor, and was then silent.

"Some one wrote to the Bishop of Anneci, who styled himself Prince and Bishop of Geneva, that M. de Voltaire had mounted the pulpit on Easter Sunday, and had pronounced there a long sermon upon theft. In consequence, the bishop wrote on this subject to the seigneur of Ferney, who replied to him. The prelate sent the correspondence to the King of France through the Duke de la Vrillière,

with a petition for the arrest of the said seigneur of Ferney. At Versailles they laughed at this proceeding, and the Duke de la Vrillière [assiduous courtier of Madame Dubarry] sent the whole correspondence to M. de Voltaire, and told him also of the gentle priest's request. The bishop then forbade every curate, priest, and monk of his diocese to confess, absolve, or give the communion to the seigneur of Ferney, without his express orders, under pain of interdiction.

"Next Easter, 1769, M. de Voltaire, while dictating to me in bed, saw some one walking in his garden. He asked me who it was. I replied to him that it was the curé of Ferney, with a Capuchin of Gex, who had come to help him confess the people.

"'Is it true,' he then said to me, 'that the Bishop of Anneci has forbidden the priests to confess me and administer to me the communion?' I replied to him, 'Yes.' 'Very well,' said he, 'since that is so, I have a fancy to confess and commune in spite of him. I even wish not to go to church, but that everything may be done in my chamber and in my bed, in order to give the good bishop a greater pleasure. That will be very pleasant; and we shall see which of the two, the bishop or myself, will carry the day. Go and find this Capuchin for me. Have you any money about you?' 'Yes.' 'Put a new crown piece upon my night-table, so that my guest can see it.'

"I obeyed, and went immediately to seek the Capuchin, who came back with me, and I introduced him. M. de Voltaire said to him, 'Father, this is Holy Week. I, also, should wish, at such a time, to fulfill my duties as a Frenchman, as an officer of the king, and as seigneur of a parish; but I am too ill to be transported to the church, and I pray you to receive my confession here.' Then he placed the crown of six francs in the hand of the Capuchin, who was struck as with a clap of thunder at the unexpected proposition which had just been made him. Nevertheless, he excused himself, saying there were at that moment several persons in the church waiting for him, but in three days he would return, and he prayed the good God to keep M. de Voltaire in these good and holy dispositions. Uttering these words, trembling like a leaf, he went out.

"During this interview, I remained at the door of the room, which I had left partly open. After the Capuchin had gone, I went in, and said to M. de Voltaire, laughing, 'You have not, then, been able to arrange your little affair?' 'No, *pardieu!*' he replied. 'The droll fellow went away as soon as he had got my six francs, promising to come and dispatch my business in three days, which he will certainly not do. But never mind. Let me alone for getting even with him.'

"During those three days he never left his bed, and the Capuchin

did not return. M. de Voltaire then sent to seek a certain Bugros, a kind of surgeon, and made him feel his pulse. Bugros said that he found the pulse excellent. 'How? *Mordieu!* ignoramus that you are!' replied M. de Voltaire, with his voice of thunder; 'you find my pulse good!' 'Ah, sir, permit me to feel it again. You have much fever,' said the poor surgeon, in no small alarm. '*Pardieu!*' said Voltaire, 'I knew very well that I had a fever; for three days I have been in this cruel condition. Go and tell the priest he ought to know what he has to do for a sick man, who, for more than three days, has had a fever as violent as this, and who is in danger of death.'

"We waited six days longer, in vain, for the Capuchin, and every day the surgeon went, on the part of M. de Voltaire, to inform the parish priest of the critical situation in which were the soul and body of the pretended invalid. At last, one fine night, he made all his servants get up at one o'clock in the morning, and sent us all together to the priest's house to notify him seriously of the danger in which our master was, and that he was unwilling to die without the solace usually given in such cases. I even carried to the clergyman the declaration below, signed by M. de Voltaire, by M. Bigex and myself, to which was joined a surgeon's certificate.[1]

[1] Declaration sent to M. the curé of Ferney, March 30, 1769.

François-Marie de Voltaire, gentleman-in-ordinary of the king's chamber, lord of Ferney, Tourney, etc., in his seventy-sixth year, being of a very feeble constitution, having dragged himself to church on Palm Sunday, despite his sickness, and having since that day experienced several attacks of a violent fever, of which M. Bugros, surgeon, has notified the pastor of Ferney, according to the laws of the kingdom, and the said invalid finding himself totally incapable of going to confess and commune at the church for the edification of his vassals, which it is both his duty and desire to do, as well as for the edification of the Protestants, by whom this region is surrounded, prays M. the pastor of Ferney to do on this occasion all that which the ordinances of the king and the decrees of the parliament command, conjointly with the canons of the Catholic church, professed in the kingdom, — the religion in which the said invalid was born, has lived, and wishes to die, and of which he desires to fulfill all the duties, as well as those of a subject of the king; offering to make all the necessary declarations, all the requisite protestations, whether public or private, submitting himself absolutely to whatever is of rule, not wishing to omit any of his duties, whatever they may be; inviting M. the pastor of Ferney to fulfill his with the greatest exactitude, as well for the edification of the Catholics as of the Protestants, who are in the house of the said invalid.

The present writing signed by his hand, and by the hands of two witnesses, a copy of it remaining at the château signed also by the invalid and the same two witnesses; the original and another copy left in the hands of the said pastor of Ferney by the two witnesses undersigned, with intent to render them authentic by the hand of a notary, if need be. The thirtieth of March, one thousand seven hundred and sixty-nine, at ten o'clock in the morning.

Signed, VOLTAIRE,

and subscribed, BIGEX and WAGNIÈRE, witnesses.

"Meanwhile, I feared much that M. de Voltaire, by force of wishing to be sick, would at last become so in reality. Despite all these proceedings and all these notifications, the priest would not come near the invalid, and the Capuchin did not return. Then a lawyer was sent for, who went, on the part of the pretended dying man, to say to the pastor that he would be obliged to denounce him to the parliament for refusal of the sacraments; that if he persisted in not complying with the invitation which had been given him he might finish by being put in prison, and perhaps punished more rigorously. The poor curate was seized with so great a terror at the alternative of interdiction or imprisonment that he was attacked upon the instant with a violent colic, of which he died some months after. A few days before he expired, I was sent by my master to inquire respecting his health, when he avowed to me that his sickness dated from that hour, and that he felt he should not long resist the revolution which had occurred in him at that time.

"The 31st of March M. de Voltaire made a further declaration before a notary, setting forth, in legal form, that WHEREAS a certain Nonotte, formerly a Jesuit, so called, and a certain Guyon, calling himself abbé, had made against him libels as insipid as calumnious, in which they accused the said M. de Voltaire of having failed in respect for the Catholic religion, THEREFORE he owes it to truth, to his honor, to his piety, to declare that he has never ceased to respect and to practice the Catholic religion professed in the kingdom; that he pardons his calumniators; that if ever there had escaped him any indiscretions prejudicial to the religion of the state he would ask pardon for it from God and from the state; and that he has lived, and wishes to die, in the observance of all the laws of the kingdom, and in the Catholic religion intimately connected with those laws.

"The priest of the parish then caused the Capuchin to be notified that it was absolutely necessary for him to come, and at last he arrived on the 1st of April. During this interval, Father Joseph and the priest had dispatched an express to the bishop to get his instructions and orders respecting the demand of the seigneur of Ferney, in case he persisted in his resolution; and those orders had reached the Capuchin. The good father, seeing no longer any obstacle from the bishop, and consenting to accept the invitation which had been made him, was introduced by me into the chamber of the pretended invalid. I left the door of this apartment ajar, and took my station in the study adjoining.

"The Capuchin was half dead with fear. M. de Voltaire began by saying to him, 'Father, I do not remember too well my *Confiteor* in the present condition of my health; say it, as well as the *Credo*, and I

will repeat it after you.' This was done, but in a manner to make any one burst with laughter; for it was a salmagundi of the *Pater*, *Credo*, *Confiteor*, and of different other offices, of which neither he, nor I, nor the Capuchin, understood anything. The Capuchin, however, was too much disturbed in his mind to notice the confusion. Afterwards, the invalid said: 'Listen, I do not go to mass as often as is required, but it is my continual sufferings which hinder me from it; I adore God in my chamber. I do no ill to any one, and I try to do as much good as possible. Of the truth of this I call to witness God, my parishioners, my servants, and the inhabitants of the province; so I pray you to give me absolution.' 'But they say,' replied the confessor, 'that you have written some bad books against the good God, the Holy Virgin, and the priests; for my part, I know nothing about it, except by hearsay. I shall be obliged, then, to ask you just to sign this little paper, which is nothing but a simple profession of faith.' He then drew from his pocket the profession of faith, which the bishop had sent him.

"The invalid replied to him, 'Have we not recited the Apostles' Creed, which contains the whole? We ought, as good Catholics, to confine ourselves to that, without which we might with reason be accused, both you and I, of innovation, and that would be no joke, as you well know.' For ten minutes the Capuchin, at intervals, presented the profession of faith to M. de Voltaire to sign, and he, without even so much as looking at it, kept replying to him that he confined himself to the Creed, which he had already recited.

"At last, the penitent began to deliver to his confessor, with vivacity and with the greatest eloquence, a long remonstrance, very touching, very pathetic, upon calumny, morals, and the tolerance which all men ought to have for one another. The confessor, at every phrase, at every period, more dead than alive, with tears in his eyes, kept putting forward the profession of faith for the penitent to sign, but in vain. M. de Voltaire, having played a long time with the distress of his confessor, sternly said to him, at length, 'Give me absolution at once!' The Capuchin, utterly confounded, and not knowing really what to reply to him, pronounced the *Absolvo*, and put the paper back into his pocket. This is all about that confession, of which so much has been said, and of which such different accounts have been given.

"Then M. de Voltaire, knowing that the parish priest still performed all his functions (for he was tormented with his colic only at intervals), demanded that he should come instantly, and administer the communion. The curate arrived, with some persons who accompanied the holy sacrament. I had summoned, on the part of the penitent, the notary, Raffo. At the very instant that the priest gave the wafer to M. de Voltaire, he, raising his voice, pronounced these words:

'Having my God in my mouth, I declare that I pardon sincerely those who have written calumnies against me to the king, and who have not succeeded in their base design; and I demand a record of my declaration from Raffo, the notary.' Raffo wrote it upon the spot, in the presence of the pastor and of all those who had entered with him into the chamber of the sick man; after which, all withdrew.

"Scarcely were all these people gone out of the château, when M. de Voltaire, with whom I alone remained, said to me, leaping briskly out of his bed (whence, a moment before, he seemed not to be able to budge), 'I have had a little trouble with this comical genius of a Capuchin; but that was only for amusement, and to accomplish a good purpose. Let us take a turn in the garden. I told you I would be confessed and commune in my bed, in spite of M. *Biord*.'

"As soon as the pastor of the parish had reached his own house with the confessor, he asked the latter, eagerly, if the penitent had signed the paper of monseigneur the bishop. The Capuchin, still trembling, and still moved by the eloquent discourse of the invalid, replied, 'No.' 'Ah, my God!' cried the priest, 'we are ruined with monseigneur! What shall we do? What will become of us? What shall we say, Father Joseph? Alas, I cannot tell!' 'No more can I,' said the Capuchin. 'It is a strange man, this M. de Voltaire; I could not get him to listen to reason respecting monseigneur's paper, and absolutely I could draw nothing from him except the *Confiteor*, the *Credo*, and a terrible sermon which he preached to me, and by which you see me still frightened out of my senses.' 'Heavens!' said the priest, 'what will monseigneur say?' For fifteen days these two men sought the means of getting themselves out of the scrape, and of avoiding interdiction. They could think of nothing better than this expedient: On the 15th of April they summoned seven witnesses, whom they persuaded to declare upon oath, before the notary, Raffo, that they had been present, and had heard M. de Voltaire, before communing, pronounce a very orthodox and complete confession of faith, and that the whole was for the greater glory of God and the edification of the faithful.

"A copy of this confession, which was a forgery, they sent to the bishop, duly attested, and in legal form.

"Some time after, by order of monseigneur of Anneci, they caused all these pieces to be printed. I told M. de Voltaire of it, and he replied to me, 'I do not wish to cause eight or nine persons to be hanged, although they have forged a paper which is ridiculous and completely false; I limit myself to pitying them. If priests in this age have been capable of a proceeding so infamous, think what they must have been capable of doing in the times of ignorance and barbarism!'

"He sent for the pretended witnesses who had signed, and who had not been in his house at the time. He represented to them how criminal their conduct had been. They entreated him to pardon them, and gave him a statement of the manner in which they had been seduced. Indeed, they had not lent themselves to the purposes of these priests except under the impression that their conduct would be as useful to M. de Voltaire himself as it was necessary to the two ecclesiastics, who were in danger only for having conformed to his will. M. de Voltaire, therefore, had little trouble in pardoning them, as we see in one of his letters, in which he speaks merrily enough to one of his friends of all that passed on this occasion."[1]

Thus Wagnière. He omitted one ludicrous incident of this battle between his lord and the Bishop of Anneci. One of the bishop's accusations against his adversary was that, at his table at Ferney, he indulged in scandalous conversation. Soon after, a magistrate of the diocese dining with him, Voltaire had one of Massillon's sermons read to the company, after the fashion of a convent, which led to much entertaining discourse upon Massillon and his times, ever a favorite topic with the master of the feast. The anecdote found its way into print, and excited much comment. The common version ran that Voltaire had adopted the *practice* of having Massillon read after dinner.

In the Voltairean correspondence of this year, 1769, along with many letters for the Sirvens, are several epistles confirmatory of Wagnière's strange tale. There are two notes addressed to the curé of Ferney, demanding his legal rights as a penitent and an invalid. One was this: "The ordinances direct that, upon the third access of fever, the sacraments are to be given to a sick person. M. de Voltaire has had eight violent ones; he notifies Monsieur the curé of Ferney of the fact."[2] There is also a letter to the bishop, written in the name of the absent Madame Denis, which testifies that her uncle was doing "more good to the province than any man in office had done in several centuries: he was draining all the swamps which infected the country; he was lending money without interest to gentlemen, and giving money to the poor; he was establishing schools where there had never been any; he

[1] 1 Mémoires sur Voltaire, par Longchamp et Wagnière, 70. (Paris, 1826.)
[2] 2 Lettres Inédites de Voltaire, 168.

was renewing barren lands; he was maintaining more than a hundred persons; he had rebuilt a church." On the other hand, some of the parish priests of the province, she said, were vexing the people with exactions and lawsuits, fleecing and bleeding their flocks, instead of feeding and comforting them. "In the name of God," she cried, "put an end to these scandals and deeds of violence!"

In a letter of July 7, 1769, to D'Argental, who disapproved this mode of making war upon *l'Infâme*, Voltaire defended himself with seriousness and at length. The Bishop of Anneci, he said, was an extreme bigot, who, when he was a parish priest in Paris, had supported the *billets de confession* with infuriate zeal, — a man deaf to reason and to justice in any affair involving his sect, "one of the most malignant persons breathing."

"He was arranging for me [he continued] a formal excommunication, which would have made a terrible noise. He did more: he was taking measures to have me accused before the parliament of Dijon of having written some very impious works. I know well that I should have confounded the accuser before God and men; but such suits are like those in which ladies plead for separation, — they are always suspected. In all this business I took no step except with the advice of two advocates. I always kept my own curé and parish in my interest. Moreover, I have in all things conformed to the laws of the kingdom. With regard to Massillon, I simply seized the opportunity when a president of the parliament of Dijon was dining with me; and it was a fair reply to the charge of holding licentious and unlawful discourse at my table which the scoundrel brought against me. In a word, it was necessary for me to fight this man with his own weapons. . . . . I spare you, my dear angel, the details, which would demand a volume, and which would give you an insight into the spirit of the priesthood, if you did not know it perfectly well already. I am in a position sufficiently embarrassing. All I can say to you is that I have some influential protectors at Rome. All this much amuses me, and, in that quarter, I am in a security the most perfect. . . . . I beg you to let Madame Denis read this letter. I cannot write to her by this post."

His position was indeed "embarrassing." To any man less adroit or more scrupulous than himself it would have been instantly fatal. His tactics were very simple: to assail *l'Infâme* unceasingly, and to secure his own safety through the

favor of the only two persons in the world who could protect him, namely, the woman who governed the king and the man who governed that woman.

Perhaps, in fairness, I should add that the letters which the Bishop of Anneci wrote to Voltaire, remonstrating against his conduct in the church, were such as a bishop ought to have written in the circumstances. The correspondence between these two men, one representing the past, and the other the future, was very long, and Voltaire's part of it was only too ingenious.

"If [wrote the bishop in his first letter, April 11, 1768], on the day of your communion, you had been seen, not thrusting yourself forward to preach to the people in the church upon robbery and theft, which much scandalized all who were present, but convincing them, like another Theodosius, by your sighs, your groans, and your tears, of the purity of your faith, the sincerity of your repentance, and the reality of the disavowal of whatever has been unedifying in your past ways of thinking and acting, then no one would have been justified in regarding as equivocal your demonstrations in favor of religion. You would have been thought more fit to approach that holy table, which the Faith does not permit even the purest souls to draw near, except with a religious fear; your parishioners would have been more edified to see you there, and perhaps you would yourself have derived more advantage from the act. But whatever may have been your past conduct, which I ought to leave to the judgment of the Sovereign Scrutinizer of hearts and consciences, it will be the fruits by which we shall judge of the quality of the tree; and I hope by your future course that you will give no reason to doubt the integrity and sincerity of what you have already done. I persuade myself of this the more easily, because I desire it with the greatest ardor, having nothing more at heart than your salvation, and not being able to forget that, as your pastor, I must render an account to God of your soul, as of all those of the flock which has been confided to me by Divine Providence."

Voltaire replied to this letter promptly and at some length, feigning not to understand the bishop: —

"Your letter [he wrote, April 15th] gives me much satisfaction, but it has a little astonished me. How could you object to my doing the duties of which every seigneur ought to give an example upon his estates, which no Christian ought to omit, and which I have so often performed? It is not enough for him to snatch his vassals from the

horrors of poverty, to encourage their marriages, to contribute as far as in him lies to their temporal happiness; it is necessary to edify them also; and it would be extraordinary indeed if the seigneur of a parish should not do in the church which he has built what all the self-styled 'Reformed' do in their temples, after their manner. Assuredly, I do not merit the compliments which you have been pleased to pay me any more than I have merited the calumnies of the insects of literature, who are despised by all honest people, and whose existence ought not to be recognized by a man of your character. I ought to despise impostures without, however, hating the impostors. The more a man advances in age, the more it is necessary for him to banish from his heart all that could embitter it; and the best course that he can take against calumny is to forget it. Every man owes some self-sacrifices; every man knows that all the little incidents which can trouble this transient life are lost in eternity, and that resignation to God, the love of our neighbor, justice, beneficence, are the only things which remain to us in the presence of the Creator of all things. Without that virtue which Cicero calls *caritas generis humani*, man is only the enemy of man; he is nothing but the slave of his self-love, of empty grandeur, of frivolous distinctions, of pride, of avarice, and of all the passions. But if he does what is right because he loves the right, if this duty (purified and consecrated by Christianity) dominates in his heart, he can hope that God, before whom all men are equal, will not reject the sentiments of which he is the eternal source. Together with you, I annihilate myself before him, not unmindful of the forms established among men. I have the honor to be, with respect, etc.

"P. S. You are too well informed not to know that in France the seigneur of a parish ought, in giving the Blessed Loaf, to inform his vassals of a theft recently committed, and burglarious in its character, and to provide for the case instantly, just as he ought to notify them if a fire broke out in the village, and set them to bringing water. These are matters of police which appertain to him."[1]

The bishop replied to this in the same strain as before, and denied the legal right of the lord of a parish to enter a church in time of service and harangue the congregation. His antagonist *would* not understand the real ground of the bishop's remonstrances: —

"The bagatelles of literature [wrote Voltaire] have nothing to do with the duties of the citizen and the Christian; literature is only an

[1] 88 Œuvres de Voltaire, 57.

amusement. Active beneficence, piety that is solid and not superstitious, the love of our neighbor, resignation to God, — these ought to be the principal occupations of every man who thinks seriously. So far as I am able, I endeavor to fulfill all these obligations in my retreat, which I render every day more profound. But my human weakness ill sustaining my efforts, I annihilate myself once more with you before Divine Providence, knowing that we can bring before God only three things which can enter into his immensity: our nothingness, our faults, and our repentance. I recommend myself to your prayers, as much as to your justice."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A FIRE OF THIRTY-SOUS BOOKS.

"WHAT harm can a book do that costs a hundred crowns?" asked Voltaire once, apropos of the hostility of the French government to the Encyclopædia. "Twenty volumes folio," he continued, "will never cause a revolution; it is the little portable volumes of thirty sous that are to be feared. If the gospel had cost twelve hundred sesterces, the Christian religion would never have been established."[1]

The history of civilization, which is the history of the influence of a few little books, is a continuous illustration of this truth; and it remains a truth in our own day of the steam newspaper. From early life Voltaire had acted upon his knowledge of it; but, during the last twenty years of his existence, while he was engaged hand to hand with *l'Infâme*, he expended his force chiefly upon pamphlets and portable volumes. Baron Grimm speaks of the works issuing from the "manufactory of Ferney." Let us say, rather, in our own language, that he constituted himself a complete Tract Society, being at once author, manager, advertiser, and distributor. He assailed his enemy with every form of printed thing, — essays, tales, burlesques, comedies, sermons, prayers, tragedies, commentaries, speeches, epistles, dialogues, histories, memoirs, poems, translations, reviews, eulogies, pleas, and arguments. The whole number of his publications during his life was about two hundred and sixty-five, of which one hundred and sixty were written after his sixtieth year. By far the greater part of these works of his old age were little books distinctly aimed at the foe which he had undertaken to crush. It is obviously impossible to give here any adequate account of this wonderful mass of composition. The reader must have recourse to the catalogue and to the works themselves. Among them, however, there are some that must be briefly noticed.

[1] Voltaire to Damilaville, April 5, 1765.

A large number of the pamphlets related to his defense of the Calas family, the Sirvens, Madame de Bombelles, La Barre, Lally, and others of his martyred clients; others were on topics suggested by them, such as the "Treatise upon Tolerance" mentioned above. Some were aimed at conspicuous defenders of the faith, like Le Franc de Pompignan, of ludicrous memory. Others resulted from his residence in and near Geneva, where for the first time he saw a people over whom the Bible exercised an authority similar to that of the infallible Pope over Catholics. The famous "Sermon of the Fifty" was one of these, — a little work in which he gives the proceedings of an imaginary club of Genevans, who groaned under the despotism of a book. He had a particular reason for making this Sermon a small work (fifty pages or so); for it was designed to neutralize the effect of a large one, the "Emile" of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, published originally, in 1762, in four volumes. Embedded in Rousseau's work was the "Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar," in which the author contrived to gratify and disgust, by turns, all classes of his readers, deists, atheists, Calvinists, and Catholics. "Emile" enjoyed the distinction of being burnt by the hangman, both at Geneva and at Paris, besides being anathematized at Rome, and having this "Sermon of the Fifty" hurled at it from Ferney.

"Emile" was such a mixture of rhapsody and eloquence, of folly and good sense, as we ought to expect from a man of Rousseau's talents when he writes upon education, after having taken the precaution to preserve his total ignorance of the subject by sending his five children to the foundling hospital as soon as they were born. This left his pen free to range over the whole field, unchecked and untrammeled. There is one man in the world who can tell us something valuable about education: it is he who has successfully educated. The Savoyard Vicar discoursed upon religion, and he did so in a manner that pleased everybody and satisfied nobody. He was a deist, but he insulted the "philosophers." "There is not one among them," he remarks, "who would not prefer the lie discovered by himself to the truth found out by another. Where is the philosopher who, for his own glory, would not willingly deceive the whole human race? The essential thing with them is to think differently from the others." This was

true of one noted man only among the "philosophers" of that age, — Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

It was the Savoyard Vicar who gave utterance to that comparison, so famous in its day, so often repeated since, between Socrates and Christ; and it was he also who, after extolling the "Scriptures" as of an excellence beyond mortal compass, suddenly appalled the orthodox reader by saying that "this same gospel is full of things incredible, — of things which reason has in aversion, and which it is impossible for any man of sense to conceive or to admit." Who could suppose, upon reading such words as these, that the Savoyard Vicar to this day supplies the pulpits of the orthodox world with the most effective line of reasoning they now ordinarily present? "Yes," cried Rousseau; "if the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus were those of a God!" The whole passage is, in its way, incomparable; it falls in with the mood of a mind fatigued with controversy or distrustful of itself. Who but Rousseau, after such an utterance, would have let his pious readers down from their ecstatic elevation by coolly adding, "With all that, this same gospel is full of things incredible." The inference he draws from such a contradiction is that we must be "always modest and circumspect, my child, and respect in silence what we know not how either to reject or comprehend." For his own part, upon the elevation of the host in the mass, "I try to annihilate my reason before the Supreme Intelligence."

Voltaire read this strange and powerful production with mingled sorrow and approval, — sorrow that such limpid and engaging eloquence was lost to truth and man. Fifty pages of the Vicar, he said, he would like to bind in morocco, and cherish as a precious treasure; but "Emile," as a whole, he held in contempt as a mass of idle dream and senseless paradox. His "Sermon of the Fifty" quickly followed the appearance of the work, and was swiftly spread over Europe.

"Fifty persons," the little book began, "instructed, pious, and reasonable, have met every Sunday for a year past in a populous and commercial city. They offer prayers, after which a member of the society pronounces a discourse; then they dine, and after the repast a collection is made for the poor. Each member presides in his turn; it belongs to the

president to offer the prayer and to deliver the sermon. Here is one of those prayers and one of those sermons. If the seed of these words falls upon good ground, doubtless it will bear fruit."

The text of the sermon which follows might well have been, "The letter killeth;" for it is aimed at that literal interpretation of the biblical legends which has killed them for all good purposes, and made them a means of arresting the development of whole communities, some nations, and millions of minds. He adduces the interesting tale of Abraham and Isaac, the pleasing story of Adam and Eve, and those sublimest of all narratives, the four Gospels, as instances of this vulgarization of the treasures of the past. He shows that if those narratives are taken as history they are immoral and pernicious, and have, in fact, been utilized by priests in every age to keep the human mind submissive to mere authority. "You know, my brethren," remarks this original preacher, "what horror has seized us when we have read together the writings of the Hebrews, while directing our attention to the outrages upon purity, charity, good faith, justice, and universal reason, which we not only find in every chapter, but which, as a climax of misery, we find consecrated in them." Add fifty pages of examples drawn from the Old and New Testaments. The preacher concludes with a prayer: —

"May that great God who hears me, that God who assuredly could not have been the offspring of a girl [*fille*], nor have died upon a gibbet, nor have been eaten in a morsel of paste, nor have inspired those books filled with contradictions, falsehood, and horror; may that God, creator of all the worlds, have pity upon this sect of Christians who blaspheme him! May he recall them to the holy and natural religion, and bestow his blessing upon all the efforts we make to have him adored! *Amen.*"

Another "Sermon" appeared about the same time, purporting to be by the Jewish rabbi, Akib, upon the *auto-da-fe* of the "savages of Lisbon." The rabbi did not fail to notice that, while the Inquisitors were burning Jews, they were chanting a psalm of a king of the Jews: "Have mercy upon me, O my God, according to thy great mercy!"

A Dialogue quickly followed, "between a Greek Monk and

an Honest Man," in which the ideas of the "Sermon of the Fifty" were placed in a new setting. The monk feebly holds to the religion of his convent; the Honest Man strongly supports "the religion of nature," consisting of the adoration of God, justice and benevolence toward men. The Dialogue ends happily: —

MONK. — "I serve God according to the usage of my convent."

HONEST MAN. — "And I according to my conscience. It tells me to fear him, and to love monks, dervishes, bonzes, and talopoins, and to regard all men as my brothers."

MONK. — "Come, come, monk as I am, I think as you do."

HONEST MAN. — "My God, bless this good monk!"

MONK. — "My God, bless this honest man!"

In 1764 appeared a volume entitled "Dictionnaire Philosophique Portatif," the beginning of that Philosophical Dictionary which now occupies eight solid volumes of his works. Among the larger prose writings of this inexhaustible man, the Philosophical Dictionary is probably the one which will be the last to become obsolete. The shortness of the articles, the variety of the subjects, the singleness of the object, the wide range of knowledge, the equally interesting ignorance, the ingenuity, the elegance, the mingled audacity and reserve, the earnestness and passion, and, above all, the humor, the wit, the fun, of this collection, render it one of the standard reservoirs of entertainment to all Christendom. It were a pity to have another work of the kind, if that were possible. As Lucian's Dialogues sufficed for the ancient world, so this "Dictionnaire" furnishes the modern nations with an abundance of the same ingredient. But Lucian is mere burlesque. In the work of Voltaire there is burlesque enough, but there is everything else besides. It is the whole of citizen Voltaire: his strength and his weakness, his thoughts and his feelings, his goodness and his faults, his extent and his limits, his seriousness and his gayety; the defender of Calas and the courtier of Dubarry, the philosopher, the child, the Frenchman, and the man, — all are here.

It is the blending of the lightest banter with the weightiest admonition that renders the "Dictionnaire Philosophique" the incomparable repository. The public devoured the first in-

stallment with an avidity not often exampled. It was printed in one thin octavo volume, in July, 1764, and copies began to get abroad in September. In December, the second edition appeared, with eight new articles. In March, 1765, the parliament of Paris had it burned by the hangman; in July of the same year Rome paid it the homage of its anathema; and before that year ended the fifth edition was published in London. In 1766 it was signally advertised by being cast into the flames which consumed the body of the heroic Chevalier de la Barre; and early in the next year it was enlarged to two volumes, octavo. Under various forms and names it continued to be the receptacle of the "chips" from the Voltairean workshop; and it remains to this day part of the current literary merchandise of the world, seldom exhibited, frequently sold, continually read. It was the complement of the Encyclopædia of Diderot, since it contained, in the most captivating form, all that the censors of that work were obliged to exclude.

The author much enjoyed the dangerous game of getting this work before the public. No other man in Europe could have done it. As early as July, 1764, he begins, in his jocular manner, to disavow the book, not yet obtainable. "Yes," he writes to D'Alembert, "I have heard that abominable Dictionary spoken of; it is a work of Satan. Be sure, if I can manage to unearth one, you shall have a copy. Happily, I have no part in this hateful work. I am innocence itself, and you will do me justice on this occasion." D'Alembert replies in the same tone, and Voltaire resumes: "Indeed, I have read that *Dictionnaire Diabolique*. It has terrified me, as it has you; but the climax of my affliction is that some Christians are so little worthy of that beautiful name as to suspect me of being the author of a work so anti-Christian. Alas! I have scarcely been able to get a copy of it." D'Alembert rejoins: —

"It is evident, as you say, that this alphabetical abomination is the work of different hands. For my part, I have recognized at least four, those of Beelzebub, Astaroth, Lucifer, and Asmodeus; for the Angelic Doctor, in his 'Treatise upon the Angels and Devils,' has very well proved that these are four different persons, and that Asmodeus is not consubstantial with Beelzebub and the others. After all, since it takes three

poor Christians to make the 'Journal Chrétien' (for there are as many engaged upon that edifying work), I do not see why it should require less than three or four poor devils to make a *Dictionnaire Diabolique*."

The Calvinists of Geneva were deeply moved by the irruption of this *Portatif* into their republic. It was well for the author that he had provided for himself a safer refuge than Les Délices; for, in Geneva, there was no Dubarry to interpose her lovely arms for his protection. The pastor Gaberel has an amusing passage upon the struggles of the Genevan magistrates and clergy to defend their people from the *Dictionnaire*, as well as from the pelting hail of the smaller portatives. Gaberel, apparently, enjoyed the telling of the story, not, perhaps, without some sympathy with the adroit and invincible foe of his brethren.

"Numerous copies [he says] arrived at Geneva in September, 1764. At once, M. Tronchin, upon the report of the consistory, caused the parcels to be seized, and the council declared the book impious, scandalous, audacious, and destructive of religion. . . . . Meanwhile, M. Tronchin, visiting Ferney, reproached Voltaire with the publication of that work, and told him that it might well be publicly burned by the hangman. 'Truly,' replied he, 'one would believe that you regret having burned the "Emile" of Jean-Jacques, and that you wish to stand well with the mechanics, his friends.' 'You depart from the question,' replied Tronchin. 'Withdraw that book, require of your accomplices the return of all the copies, or I shall be under an obligation to issue against you the most disagreeable requisition; and I notify you that, at the present moment, the ministers of the King of France are little disposed in your favor.'

"Voltaire shrugged his shoulders; but the next day he wrote to the council a letter which might form a companion-piece to that which he had formerly sent them, apropos of Jeanne Darc. 'I am obliged,' wrote he, 'to inform the Magnificent Council that, among the pernicious libels with which this city is inundated, all of which are printed at Amsterdam by Michael Rey, there will arrive on Monday next, at the book-store of Chirol, of Geneva, a parcel containing some copies of the "Philosophical Dictionary," the "Gospel of Reason," and others, which I despise as much as I do the "Letters from a Mountain," of the Sieur Rousseau. I believe I am doing my duty in giving you this information, and I submit it entirely to the wisdom of the Council, who will know how to repress all infractions of the public peace and good order.'

"But Voltaire, Chirol, and Gando (booksellers of Geneva) agreed to employ a device familiar to literary contrabandists, as to others. While the police seized the parcels of Chirol, a large cargo passed the frontiers at another point, to the address of Gando, who could thus furnish Geneva with an abundant supply of the prohibited goods. M. Tronchin, indignant at the trick played upon him by Voltaire, launched against him one of the most energetic of requisitions, and his work was burned by the hand of the executioner, September 26, 1764.

"This vigilance and severity appearing excessive to Voltaire, he endeavored to escape the embarrassment by means of a most malicious ruse. He had his saddest productions printed under religious titles, or, at least, with titles to deceive at the first glance. In order to delude better the Genevan authorities, he took pains to begin most of these pamphlets by three or four pages of the best savor, and which served as introduction to the most unworthy blasphemies. He used the titles of 'Philosophic Almanac,' 'Serious Thoughts upon God,' 'Sermons of the Reverend Jacques Rossetes,' 'Homily of the Pastor Bourne,' 'Gospel of the Day,' 'Letters of a Candidate to the Pastor De Roches,' 'Address of the Pastors of Geneva to their Colleagues,' 'Counsels to Fathers of Families,' 'Letter upon the Holy Land, establishing the Reality of the Miracles of Jesus Christ.' Thus he emptied upon Geneva all the arsenal of his unbelief.

"The Consistory, however, kept good watch; the pastors multiplied their visits, and entreated the heads of families not to buy those bad books. But Voltaire, in order to baffle this ecclesiastical surveillance, invented means wherein burlesque disputed the palm with impudence. Attention once called to the trick of the false titles, the sale at the booksellers became impossible. Voltaire, who wished to continue his work, though at the price of great sacrifices of money, distributed *gratis* his productions, employing to this end all the little manœuvres he could imagine. Genevans, entirely devoted to him, some belonging to the highest, others to the lowest classes of society, had no scruple to second his views; and their services were completed by those of a troupe of colporteurs, liberally paid. At length, the pretended Sermons were found everywhere. On entering the shops, the confederates, under pretext of a little purchase, slipped some impious pamphlets among the papers or parcels. If they found young women serving at the counter, care was taken to choose writings best calculated to corrupt their imaginations. The colporteurs ascended the front steps of houses, and fastened these productions to the bell-pull, or slid them under the sill. Piles of them were found in the shops of the clock-makers, and the little errand-boys confessed that a gentleman had given them six sous to place the packets upon the

work-benches. Every evening, upon the seats of the public walks, were found some printed leaves, forgotten on purpose.

"Still worse, they succeeded in introducing them into the class-rooms of the college, and children found these little pamphlets among their copy-books. Those who know the charm of mysterious things for the young can understand that these works were not given up to masters and parents until they had been read and devoured. The Voltairean propaganda went still farther: at the places where lessons in the Catechism were given, often the Catechisms were replaced by books bound in the same manner, and containing those perfidious Dialogues in which unbelief triumphs at pleasure over a Christian opponent. Copies of the Philosophical Dictionary were bound with the title and appearance of Psalms, and left upon the benches of the Madeleine Temple, for the use of young people." [1]

Upon referring to the works of Voltaire, the reader will find most of the pious titles mentioned by the pastor Gaberel, as well as several others, such as, "Epistle to the Romans," "God and Men," "The Adorers, or the Praises of God," "The Bible Commented upon and Explained," — titles necessary to conceal from the police the inculcation of Christian sentiments. The reader of to-day does not find those productions to be so "sad" as the worthy Swiss pastor describes them. They are not perfect works; there is much in them not suited to us, nor to our day; but the spirit of them is humane and reasonable, and there is a great deal in them that is altogether lovely and right. Instead of wearying the reader with a vain attempt to describe these works, I will endeavor to convey an idea of their spirit and intent by a few representative lines from some of them.

[God and men.] "Whoever dares to say, *God has spoken to me*, is criminal toward God and men; for God, the common father of all, would he have communicated himself to an individual? God to walk! God to talk! God to write upon a little mountain! God to fight! God to become man! God-man to die upon the cross! Ideas worthy of Punch! To invent all those things, the last degree of rascality! To believe them, the extreme of brutal stupidity! To substitute a God powerful and just in place of those astounding farces, extreme wisdom!"

[The curse of dogma.] "Of all the religions, which is the least bad? The one in which we find the least dogma and the most virtue.

[1] Voltaire et les Genevois, par J. Gaberel. Paris, 1757. Page 114.

Which is the best? It is the simplest. Dogma has caused to die in torments ten millions of Christians. The moral system has not produced one scratch. Dogma still carries division, hate, atrocity, into provinces, into cities, into families. O virtue, console us!" [God and Men, chapter xliv.]

[Plato the author of Christian doctrines.] "All the opinions of the first Christians were taken from Plato, even the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, which the ancient Jews never knew. The kingdom of heaven, which is spoken of so often in the gospel, is found in the 'Phædo' of Plato. Purgatory, especially, has been obviously taken from the 'Phædo.' The doctrine of the resurrection is also entirely Platonian, since in the tenth book of the 'Republic' Plato introduces Heres resuscitated and relating what had passed in the other world." [God and Men, chapter xliv.]

[Hell.] "All those with whom we have dealings are not such as the advocate who paid his clients the whole of the sum involved in a suit which had been lost through his neglect. All women are not like Ninon Lenclos, who guarded so religiously the money confided to her keeping, while the gravest personages betrayed their trust. In one word, gentlemen, everybody is not a philosopher. We have to do with many a rascal who has reflected little; with a crowd of insignificant people, who are brutal, drunkards, thieves. Preach to them, if you wish, that there is no hell, and that the soul is mortal. For my part, I will roar in their ears that they will be damned if they steal from me. I will imitate that country pastor, who, having been outrageously plundered by his flock, said to them in his sermon, 'I know not why Jesus Christ thought of dying for a pack of low scoundrels like you!'"

[Death.] "As for death, it is no more felt than sleep. The people who announce it in form are enemies of the human race; it is necessary to forbid them ever to come near us. Death is nothing at all; the thought of it alone is sad. Let us, then, never think of it, and let us live from day to day." [To Madame du Deffand, 1761.]

[Could he be mistaken?] "The nearer my old age and the weakness of my constitution bring me to the grave, the more I have thought it my duty to know if so many celebrated persons, from Jerome and Augustine to Pascal, might not be partly in the right. I have seen clearly that they were not, and that they were only subtle and vehement advocates of the worst of all causes." [To Madame du Deffand.]

[God.] "Men, as all the philosophers of antiquity said, have made God in their own image. This is why the first Anaxagoras, as ancient as Orpheus, expressed himself thus in his verses: 'If the birds imagined a God, he would have wings; the God of horses would run upon

four legs.' The vulgar conceive God as a king who holds his bed of justice in his court. Tender hearts represent him to themselves as a father who takes care of his children. The wise attribute to him no human affection. They recognize a power, necessary, eternal, which animates all nature, and they resign themselves." [Discours de M. Bellequier.]

Such ideas as these he illustrated by every kind of diverting tale, anecdote, dialogue, and narration. He returns often to some of his topics; as, for example, to the inconvenience and demoralization resulting from the eighty-two idle days annually exacted by the church from all laborers,— fifty-two Sundays and thirty holidays. On those days, as he complains, his farmers could get drunk at the wine-shop without scandal, but if they presumed to prune the vines in the field, the curé was upon them, with the magistrate behind him. He is never weary of showing the absurdities to which people are reduced who accept as historical the prodigies and miracles which swarm in all ancient writings. He relates a story of a pious countess who has faith, as she believes, much larger than a grain of mustard seed, and yet cannot remove a very small mountain near her château. She has a pot of mustard brought upon the scene, which leads her reprobate husband to remark that "a miracle to-day is indeed *mustard after dinner*," a jest which "deranged all the devotion of madame." Calvin himself must have laughed at this story, as Voltaire relates it. It was a favorite device with him to present more abstruse topics in the form of a dialogue between a lady of rank and her maid, her tutor, her doctor, her pastor. Under "Maladie," in the Dictionnaire, there is a conversation between a beautiful young princess and her physician, in which regimen and moderation are exalted above medicine and medical skill. The science is of the most advanced, the *morale* is good, but the humor is incomparable.

Sown thick in his later writings are sentences that stick in the memory from their truth, or epigrammatic point. I select a few:

"I have always offered one prayer to God, which is very short. This is it: '*My God, render my enemies very ridiculous!*' God has heard me."

"The more you know, the less you are sure."

"As to the thunder, it is a bagatelle; we inoculate it, like the small pox."

"A sure means of not yielding to the desire to kill yourself is to have always something to do."

"Opinion rules the world, and wise men rule opinion."

"All nature is nothing but mathematics."

"To make a good book one must have a prodigious length of time and the patience of a saint."

"They say that you [Marmontel] are going to be married. If the news is true, I congratulate you; if it is false, still I felicitate you."

"There is an English tragedy which begins with these words: 'Put money in your pocket, and laugh at the rest.' That is not tragic, but there is much sense in it. This world is a great table, where people of understanding have good cheer; the crumbs are for the fools [*sots*]."

"The human race would be too unhappy if it were as common to commit atrocious things as it is to believe them."

"Whoever has many witnesses of his death dies with courage."

"Theology is in religion what poison is among the aliments."

"Doctor Colladon, seeing the father of Tronchin praying more devoutly than usual, said to him, 'Sir, you are going to fail; pay me.'"

"Most men die without having lived."

"Inscription for a picture representing beggars: *Rex fecit.*"[1]

"Who ought to be the king's favorite? The people."

"It is necessary to have a religion and not believe the priests, as it is necessary to have a regimen and not believe the doctors."

"Having it clearly in your heart that all men are equals, and in your head that the exterior distinguishes them, you can get on very well in the world."

"I know no great men except those who have rendered great services to the human race."

"Yes, without doubt, peace is of more value than truth; that is to say, we must not vex our neighbor by arguments; but it is necessary to seek the soul's peace in truth, and to tread under foot the monstrous errors which would perturb it, and render it the prey of knaves."

The eye of the reader is occasionally arrested by a tabular statement, or array of figures; for he knew every device for alluring the languid mind. Thus, we have in "Dieu et les Hommes" a catalogue of the "murders committed in the name

[1] The king made them.

of Jesus," from Constantine to Louis XIV., ending with the sum total of victims, 9,468,800; all of whom were either "hanged, drowned, broken on the wheel, or burned, for the love of God." He insists that under the Romans there were but few persecutions of Christians, and those not very destructive of life; but, that under the sway of the Popes and bishops, religion became crueller with each century, until, from Leo X. onward, it inundated both continents with human blood. Then, "in several provinces wood was made dear by the number of burnings at the stake, and in several countries the executioners were fatigued with their work." And all this woe, agony, and desolation grew out of the insensate claim of the priests to a supernatural revelation, though the human origin of all their dogmas had been traced and proved!

The reader may well ask, in wonder, how it was possible for an author, living on French soil, within the clutch of the most powerful hierarchy ever seen in the world, to print and circulate these little books, sending out a new one every two or three months for fifteen years or more. He gives the true answer to this question in the sentence quoted above: "Opinion rules the world." He had converted a great part of Europe to his way of interpreting the universe. The reading people were, as a class, the vassals of his mind, from the Empress Catherine and King Frederic to the voluble abbé of French supper tables, and the London apprentice who read the continuous extracts from M. de Voltaire in the "Annual Register." The voice of "good company" was on his side; the palaces and the bureaus were filled with his disciples. It is public opinion, after all, that maintains both hierarchies and dynasties. The Inquisition, we plainly see, was a highly popular institution in its day, and there is abundant proof that the massacres of St. Bartholomew were hailed with enthusiastic approval by the pious people of the south of Europe. Public opinion, from 1762 to the end of Voltaire's life, was on the side of the philosophers.

By that time, too, he had had forty years' practice in surreptitious publication. His latest French editors give us a list of his pseudonyms, *one hundred and eight in number*. He avowed nothing; he distinctly disavowed nearly everything. It was the "Archbishop of Canterbury" who wrote "a letter

to the Archbishop of Paris." As occasion suggested, he was "an Academician," "a Benedictine," "an advocate," "an ecclesiastic." If he had anything particularly heterodox to offer, he was very likely to attribute it to an abbé, a pastor, or a monk. Thus, for example, his "Bible Explained" was assigned to the Reverend Almoners of the King of Poland; his terrible "History of the Parliament of Paris," was attributed to the Abbé Bigorre; and several of his "Homilies" to the pastor Bourn. It was a Quaker who wrote un-Quakerlike "Letters to the Pompignans;" and the "Sermon preached at Bâle" was of course delivered by the Rev. Josias Rossette. "All in God" was attributed to the Abbé Tilladet; and the "Defense of Mylord Bolingbroke" was assigned to "Doctor Good-Natur'd Wellwischer." He used also the names of his friends: among others, Thieriot, Damilaville, and Bolingbroke. If these names deceived no one, they frequently amused the reader, and always deprived the hierarchy of the easiest handle to seize him by.

The printing and distribution of his little books were not so easy; but here again he was assisted by his long experience, as well as by his former residence in England, Holland, and Prussia. He personally knew several of the printers and publishers of those countries; and when he had something more than commonly contraband to spread abroad, he could rely upon the covert aid of the King of Prussia. We find him writing to Frederic in April, 1767: —

"If I were less old, and if I had health, I would leave without regret the château which I have built, the trees that I have planted, to go and end my life in the country of Clèves, with two or three philosophers, and to devote my last days, under your protection, to the printing of some useful books; but, sire, could you not, without compromising yourself, cause some booksellers of Berlin to be encouraged to reprint them, and to have them sold throughout Europe at a low price, which renders the sale of books easy?"

Frederic replied a few days after: "You can avail yourself of my printers at your pleasure; they enjoy entire liberty, and, as they are connected with those of Holland, France, and Germany, I do not doubt that they have ways of forwarding books wherever they think proper."

Thus, with printers at his own door, printers in Holland, Berlin, Lyons, and Paris, with publishers in London quick to discern profit in a book, with monarchs for allies and co-operators, with a revenue three or four times as great as his expenditure, with a vivacity of purpose which neither age nor toil could diminish, it is not surprising that he reached and convinced the disinterested portion of the educated class in all the more advanced countries. Everywhere he had allies, interested and disinterested. The booksellers, who received a huge package of contraband literature for nothing, and sold its contents at the price of lawful merchandise, were not ill pleased. The bewitching woman who amused the dull old French king defended the poet who celebrated her charms in classic verse. The *régime* was a house divided against itself, and he had learned how to use one half of it to protect himself against the other.

Sometimes he was a little too daring, and had a narrow escape. Wagnière has a story of a lady, the sister of the famous naval hero, Captain Thurot, coming from Paris to Geneva for "a cargo of Philosophical Dictionaries and other prohibited works."

"She consulted the philosopher of Ferney upon the means of getting them into France. His zeal for the spread of the light was so strongly kindled on this occasion that he lent his trunks, his carriage, his coachman, his postilion, and four horses to convey the whole invoice fifteen miles on the way to Paris, as far as the first custom-house. A clerk of the customs, who was under obligation to him, offered to go with the books himself, and promised to have the trunks officially sealed without being opened. The scoundrel, on the contrary, on reaching the custom-house, turned informer. The trunks, the carriage, the horses, all were seized. The sister of M. Thurot, after having defended herself with courage, made her escape from the guards. This mishap gave great uneasiness to M. de Voltaire, who believed himself in danger. Nevertheless, he escaped very happily from the affair through the influence of the Chancellor de Maupeou and M. de Malesherbes."

We see by his letters that he took the lofty tone in complaining of this disrespect to the equipage of "Madame Denis," and threatened dreadful things if the subordinate officials were not more discriminating in their conduct. The coach and

horses were returned to the lady of Ferney. He felt safe at last. "One of the bigot magistrates of Paris," he wrote soon after, "has said that he could not die content till he had seen a philosopher hanged. I can assure him that it is not I who will give him that pleasure."

At that period every letter passing through the mail was liable to be opened and read at a bureau organized for the purpose. In the correspondence of Voltaire there are countless allusions to the "Dictionnaire Philosophique," but among them all there is not one which could be used to fasten the authorship upon himself. In writing to his former secretary, Collini, to whom he had dictated many of the articles, or to the D'Argentals, his nearest friends, from whom he had no secrets, nay, to the very printers and publishers of the work, it was always, "Have you seen a curious volume, published lately, called 'Le Portatif,' very scandalous, and yet containing some things not altogether bad?" or, "How ridiculous to attribute such an *omnium gatherum* to *me*, sick as I am, when it is so evidently the work of many hands!" or, "That 'Portatif' you speak of I have not seen, but I am told that it was put together by a certain Dubut, formerly a student in theology;" or, "Can you pick me up a copy, somewhere, of that *Dictionnaire Diabolique*, which I still hear of occasionally?" Such forms he employed in writing to his most familiar friends, when, perhaps, he was consigning to them packages of the work. Another device was to publish several things at once, and thus, as he remarked, "to prove an *alibi*." In 1769 he hurries the printing of his tragedy of "Les Guèbres" for this reason; for, as he wrote to D'Argental, "it is physically impossible that I should have done all at once the 'History of the Age of Louis XV.,' 'Les Guèbres,' the 'History of the Parliament,' and another dramatic work, which you will see immediately. I have but one body and one soul, both very weakly; I should be obliged to have three to do what is attributed to me."

The reader perceives from this passage that, busy as he was with *l'Infâme*, he had not forgotten the scene of his early glory, the Théâtre-Français. He had lost some of the dramatist's skill, but none of his inextinguishable interest in the triumphs of the stage. "Olympie" (founded upon the story of Cassan-

dra), played at his own theatre in 1762, and produced in Paris in 1764 with moderate success, was an old subject with him; it was suddenly taken in hand again, and finished in a week, when he was sixty-nine years of age. "It is the work of six days," he wrote to D'Alembert. That genial and witty philosopher replied, "The author ought not to have rested on the seventh." Voltaire rejoined, "Also, it repents me of my work," and, soon after, sent him a version of the piece, much amended.

Then, in 1764, he produced a tragedy entitled the "Triumvirat," which was played and published without the name of the author, and without that degree of success which tempts an anonymous poet to avow his work. In 1767 he wrote "Les Scythes," of which, in the heat of composition, he conceived the highest hopes. It was an old device of his, generally successful hitherto, to contrast the manners of a hardy, poor, and free people like the Scythians of old, with those of a people like the Persians, corrupted by luxury and servitude. But his hand had in some degree lost it cunning; and, although this piece was received with respectful applause on its production, it was soon withdrawn.

In 1769 he composed "Les Guèbres, or La Tolérance," mentioned above, not designed for representation on the stage, and printed anonymously at Geneva. In order the better to conceal the authorship, he dedicated it to himself; for he was aware that the mere word "tolerance," as part of the title, was likely to betray the origin of a piece distinctly aimed at *l'Infâme*. The heroine, a beautiful young girl of the sect of fire-worshipers, falls into the hands of the Roman High Priest of Pluto, who condemns her to the stake for adoring the sun, — a fate from which she is rescued, after five acts of various anguish, by the august Emperor of Rome, the mighty Cæsar, who not only saves the lovely maiden, but abolishes the arrogant and ruthless priest. The work contains telling lines, powerful passages, and effective scenes. Nevertheless, it was the work of a poet seventy-five years old, — of a poet, too, who had in his mind a line of High Priests who had perverted the policy of his government for generations. The piece had success with the public, but was never performed.

Nor must I omit all mention of his two comic operas of

1765, though neither of them ever saw the light of the stage candles. These gay little pieces were written for Grétry, who, on his return from Italy, where he had been studying music for two years, passed several months at Geneva, whence he frequently visited Ferney. Voltaire and his niece, after hearing him play some of his compositions upon the harpsichord, conceived the highest opinion of his talents, and urged him by all means to try his fortune at Paris. To afford him a better chance in the metropolis, Voltaire offered to write for him a comic opera, a kind of entertainment then in the highest vogue, to the detriment of the classic drama. He produced the "Baron d'Otrante" and the "Deux Tonneaux," which Grétry conveyed to Paris, and offered one of them to the Italian company as the first essay of a young man in the country. The actors declined the piece. They admitted, however, that the opera was not without merit, and that there was good promise in the work. They even engaged the composer to send word to the young man that, if he would come to Paris, they could point out to him some changes necessary to be made to fit his opera for representation; adding that, with docility and a little study of their performances, he might make himself of use to their theatre, and render himself worthy to be attached to it. The young author declined their invitation. Grétry, however, had a successful career in Paris as a composer of music, surviving the Revolution, and almost witnessing the collapse of the Bonaparte brigandage in 1814. He is still called the "creator of the comic opera of France."

In 1764, as if not yet sufficiently employed, Voltaire undertook to review foreign books for the "Gazette Littéraire," a rival to Fréron's abusive sheet. Among the English works reviewed by him were Algernon Sidney's Discourses upon Government, Lord Kames's Elements of Criticism, Lady Wortley Montagu's Letters, Churchill's Poems, Hume's History of England, Middleton's Life of Cicero, the Memoirs of Sir Robert Walpole, Lowth's Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews, and the romance of Julia Mandeville. He took very naturally the editorial tone, and assumed the editorial disguises with the ease of an old hand.

In his notice of Lord Kames's Elements of Criticism, there is some amusing banter upon the Scottish author's preference

of Shakespeare to all other dramatists and poets. We see clearly in this passage the reason why Frenchmen were so late in coming to the appreciation of Shakespeare. The two languages are of genius so radically different that the poetry and drama of each is untranslatable into the other. More than once Voltaire cites, as the last conceivable degree of the undignified, the opening scene of "Hamlet:"—

BERNARDO. — "Have you had quiet guard?"

FRANCISCO. — "Not a mouse stirring."

Voltaire's version of this colloquy betrays the secret of his disapproval of it: "Le soldat Bernardo demande au soldat Francisco si tout a été tranquille. *Je n'ai pas vu trotter une souris*, répond Francisco." He adduces also Hamlet's soliloquy, "Oh that this too, too solid flesh would melt," as a specimen of barbaric crudity too obviously absurd to require remark. He appends a translation, which, he says, is "almost line for line, and very exact:"—

> "Oh! si ma chair trop ferme ici pouvait se fondre,
> Se dégeler, couler, se résoudre en rosée!
> Oh! si l'être éternel n'avait pas du canon
> Contre le suicide!... ô ciel! ô ciel! ô ciel!
> Que tout ce que je vois aujourd'hui dans le monde
> Est triste, plat, pourri, sans nulle utilité!
> Fi! fi! c'est un jardin plein de plantes sauvages!"

The "Gazette Littéraire" ought to have flourished with such a contributor. It is to be feared it did not. "I do not hear your Gazette spoken of," he wrote to D'Argental, in March, 1764; "and I am afraid it will not last through the year. If it is wise, it is lost; if it is malign, it is odious. These are the two rocks; and as long as Fréron amuses idle people with his weakly malignities the public will neglect other periodicals, which are only useful and reasonable. Thus the world is constituted, and I am sorry for it."

CHAPTER XXXV.

HE IS A TROUBLESOME NEIGHBOR.

President de Brosse and other personages interested in the land of Gex speak of the lord of Ferney as a neighbor who kept the region in a broil. The austerer Calvinists of Geneva regarded him in the same light. Let us, then, view him for a moment in his character of neighbor, using the best light that can now be cast upon that remote time and scene. The Council of Geneva, as M. Gaberel has told us, burnt the Philosophical Dictionary by their hangman's hands, and the anonymous author of that work submitted to the affront with apparent docility. They had given him other proofs of regard which, perhaps, had their effect upon the course of events.

We should not forget, what M. Gaberel has also mentioned, that there were in Geneva and along the shores of the lake a considerable number of polite and educated families who were above the squabbles of a sect. With them, and particularly with his nearer lake neighbors, he appears to have lived on terms of agreeable familiarity, exchanging with them seeds, flowers, fruit, nuts, slips, vehicles, visits, compliments, all in the cordial fashion of country people shut out from the world with one another much of the year. Who would have expected information upon his neighborly character from New York? One of the families nearest to Ferney, and not far from Les Délices, was that of the Gallatins, a name of distinction for centuries in Switzerland and France; honorable now in the United States through Albert Gallatin and his descendants. They lived at Pregny, close to the lake shore, about midway between Ferney and Geneva, a mile and a half from both. They, too (and Madame Gallatin above all), were enthusiasts in gardening and fruit culture, a ruling taste with the lord of Ferney. For many years there was a very frequent interchange of notes, messages, and gifts between the

two houses; some of the notes being written upon scraps of paper and the backs of playing cards. "Dozens of these little billets in Voltaire's hand are still preserved," says the biographer of Albert Gallatin, who gives some specimens.[1] On the back of the deuce of clubs he answers a note from Madame Gallatin, in which, as it seems, she had recommended a poor tinker for employment at the château. He seizes the chance to scribble on the card the latest news from Paris, — how the king was thriving in his contest (of 1756) with the parliament of Paris: —

"We are at the orders of Madame Gallatin. We shall try to employ tinker. Parliament Paris refuses all decree, and wishes the king to ask pardon of parliament Bezançon. English wished to bombard Havre again. Have not succeeded. Carriage at half past one. Respects."

Another note appears to be an answer to one from Madame Gallatin, in which she had expressed her regret not to have been at home when he called, and to have asked if he had had anything particular to say: —

"When V. presents himself at a lady-neighbor's house, he has no other business, no other object, than to pay his court to her. We are deferring the rehearsals until the return of the Tyrant, who has a cold on the chest. If there is any news from Berlin, M. Gallatin is entreated to communicate it. Thousand respects."

Another refers to the vintage of 1759. The smaller growers usually sold their grapes to a person who kept the apparatus of wine-making. Madame Gallatin and Voltaire appear to have sold their grapes to the same individual. He writes: —

"How is our invalid, our dear neighbor, our dear daughter? I have been to the vines, madame. The wasps are devouring all the grapes, and what they do not eat are dry. The vine-dresser of Madame du Tremblay has been here to give me his opinion. 'My barrels are not hooped,' says he; 'put off the vintage.' 'Hoop your barrels,' said I. 'Your grapes are not ripe,' said he. 'Go and see them,' said I. He went; he saw. 'Gather your grapes as soon as possible,' said he. What orders do you give, madame, to neighbor V.?"

[1] Life of Albert Gallatin. By Henry Adams. Page 6. Philadelphia, 1879.

Another note acknowledges a basket of figs sent by Madame Gallatin to Les Délices: —

"Your figs, madame, are a present so much the more pleasing because we can say, as was said by another, '*For the time of figs was not yet.*' We have none at Les Délices; but we shall have a theatre at Tourney, and we start in an hour to come to see you. Receive, madame, for yourself and all your family, the tender respects of V."

Another present of figs he acknowledges thus: —

"You give me more figs, madame, than there are in the land of *papimanie*;[1] and as to myself, madame, I am like the fig-tree of the Gospel, dry and accursed. It is not as an actor, it is as a friend very much attached to all your family, that I am warmly interested in the health of Madame Gallatin-Rolaz. We rehearse on Tuesday in pontifical robes. Those who have tickets will come if they wish. I am yours, madame, for life. V."

The following needs no explanation: —

"We relied upon all returning to supper at Ferney after the play. The Duke de Villars retained us; our carriage broke down; we experienced all the possible mishaps. Life is sown with them; but the greatest of all is not to have had the honor of supping with you."

This was written in 1761. After an interval of seven years, we have the following to Madame Gallatin: —

"August 10, 1768. At Ferney. You are blest of God, madame. Six years ago I planted fig-trees, and not one succeeds. This would really be a reason for blasting my fig-trees. But if I had miracles to perform, they would not be of that kind. I limit myself to thanking you, madame. I believe it is only the old fig-trees that bear. Old age is still good for something. I have, like you, some horses thirty years old; that is the reason why I love them. There is nothing like them, except old friends. Young ones, however, are not to be despised, ladies. V."

In other letters we see him interesting himself in the promotion of a young Gallatin, officer in the Swiss Guards of the King of France. He gave the young man a letter to D'Argen-

[1] Pope mania, — that is, France. Madame Gallatin's house was not on French soil.

tal, describing him as sprung from "the most ancient family in Switzerland, who have had themselves killed for us, from father to son, since Henry IV.'s time." The Landgrave of Hesse, he who sent his "Hessians" to America in 1776, was a friend of Madame Gallatin, and gave her his portrait. Voltaire composed for her the verses which she sent in acknowledgment. The landgrave sent the lord of Ferney a present of asparagus seed, through Madame Gallatin, — a seed that bears no fruit until the third year. "Your most serene highness," wrote Voltaire, "accords me a very signal benefit, rarely to be expected from princes, nor even from doctors. You have given me a *brevet* for three years of life."

These glimpses of the neighborhood life of Voltaire serve to show us the terms on which he lived with that "third" of the educated families of Geneva who followed not Calvin. Distinguished members of the orthodox party were also among his friends, and were visitors at his house, until "party lines" were drawn to rigidity by later events. There were "rigorists" among the Genevans then, as there are now, there and everywhere; but there was also the class of "the relaxed" (*les relâchés*), who followed Calvin afar off, and would willingly have been regarded as not belonging to the procession. It was they who came in headlong crowds to fill up the theatre at Tourney, hours before the time for the rising of the curtain, but not the less, on Sunday morning, repaired to the Calvinistic temple.

The reader must bear in mind, too, that the master of Ferney was the richest individual and the largest employer of labor in "the land of Gex," the tract of country, twenty-one miles long and nine wide, between the Jura mountains and the Genevan lake, then including twenty-eight parishes and twelve thousand people, — Swiss, French, Savoyards. He was certainly a troublesome neighbor to whomsoever wished to oppress or prey upon these ingenious and amiable people. There is a third of a volume of carefully executed writings on their behalf in his works. At one time we see him appealing to a secular court against the violence of a curé toward a parishioner; now he petitions his government to alter a vexatious discriminating duty upon salt; later, he informs the ministry that his neighbors are subjected to eleven differ-

ent taxes, — land-tax, poll-tax, tithe, twentieth, seigneurie, import duties, tobacco-tax, salt-tax, special salt-tax, leather-tax, and road-tax payable in labor. His various writings on behalf of his poor neighbors and tenants, from 1761 to 1777, — thirty-two pieces in all, — reveal much to us of the condition of the industrious and frugal people of France before the revolution.[1] The most hasty reader cannot fail to notice the force and limpid clearness of these compositions on behalf of the peasant, the laborer, and the serf. Nor did it lessen his zeal for the serfs of Burgundy to know that "twenty thousand fathers of families" in that province were held in bondage by convents and abbeys.

He had one of the qualities which we observe in all the natural masters of men, the legitimate aristocrats: a sense of the folly, as well as the cruelty, of killing, maiming, disheartening, or in any other way lessening the productive power of the goose that lays the golden egg. "Who ought to be the king's favorite?" he asked. His reply was, "The people." Through his conviction of this truth he was about to become himself a kind of king, a refuge and an industrial chief to some of the oppressed people both of Geneva and of Gex. "I have had the insolence to build a city," he often says in his later letters; meaning that, during his residence in the land of Gex, he had converted Ferney from a village of forty-nine hopeless peasants into a thriving factory town of twelve hundred inhabitants, watchmakers, clockmakers, jewelers, and silk weavers, whose products shone in distant courts, and reached many countries beyond the sea. The history of this achievement is one of the most curious episodes of his life.

It began with the judicial burning at Geneva of Rousseau's "Emile" in 1763, an event which not only excited the warmest controversy in the little republic, but caused great numbers of the people to devour the eloquent half-truths of that morbid, ignorant, histrionic genius. The first sentence of his "Contrat Social" is an excellent example of his method: "Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains." It is a pair of lies. Man is nowhere born free, and everywhere enjoys a measure of freedom. But the leash of glittering falsehoods made poor men reflect upon their lot, and they found it

[1] See 39 Œuvres de Voltaire, 304 to 449, 97-volume edition.

needlessly hard. He told them also that every citizen, being a unit of the population, an atom of the body politic, ought to be also a fraction, if infinitesimal, of the sovereignty. He enveloped such ideas in melodious, deceptive words, wholly unrestrained by knowledge of the past or observation of the present, wholly unacquainted with facts, life, history, science, business, men; a wonderful histrionic artist, enacting the philanthropist and the philosopher, with sheets of paper for a stage, and, finally, "bringing down the house." Mr. Morley, who has studied this unhappy man deeply and wisely, well says that Rousseau's philosophy is like Hamlet's book, "words, words, words." His system being words, and himself a master of words, he deluded and captivated myriads of amiable men, whose education was chiefly through words.[1]

The first community to be disturbed by the teachings of Rousseau was his native Geneva, a community which three centuries of Calvinistic sermons had rendered susceptible to the influence of words. In Geneva, as everywhere on the Continent, the industrious poor man was excluded from participation in the sovereignty. Geneva was less a "republic" than ancient Athens, since the most numerous class of the citizens had no voice in the government, not so much as the casting of an oyster shell. There was the Great Council of Two Hundred, and the Little Council, or Senate, of Twenty-Five; there was, also, the Consistory of the Clergy, which held regular meetings, and had much power over education and morals. These bodies were independent of the people, and resented, as insufferable "insolence," the claim of the people to some influence over their decisions.

In 1763, the inhabitants of the republic were of three classes: (1) the governing class, consisting of the two councils, the clergy, their families and dependents; (2) the shopkeepers, manufacturers, and master mechanics, that is, the *bourgeois*,

[1] "Rousseau's method," says Mr. Morley, "charmed their *temperament*. A man who handles sets of complex facts is necessarily slow-footed, but one who has only words to deal with may advance with a speed, a precision, a consistency, a conclusiveness, that has a magical potency over men who insist on having politics and theology drawn out in exact theorems, like those of geometry. Rousseau traces his conclusions from words, and develops his system from the interior germs of phrases." (Rousseau. By John Morley. Vol. ii. page 135. London, 1873.)

who demanded a share of political power; (3) the journeymen mechanics and the employed class generally, who, besides not having any political rights, could not set up in business for themselves, nor fill the lowest office, nor exercise either of the liberal professions. These "Helots" of the republic, the most numerous class in the city, were called Natives, because they were somewhat less native to the place than the other inhabitants. A Native was the son, grandson, or great-grandson of foreigners who had settled in Geneva; he was not of the original stock; his ancestors had not smelt the fire that burned Servetus.

This class, which included many of the most exquisite mechanics in Europe, the products of whose skill and fidelity nobles were proud to wear and kings to bestow, demanded the rights of *bourgeois;* and the *bourgeois*, while pressing for some small share of political power for themselves, rejected the modest demand of the Natives with scorn. All this was latent in Geneva, until Rousseau's maddening rhetoric ran over Europe like prairie fire, thin, sparkling, easily extinguishable, but capable of setting in a blaze any dry accumulation that lay in its path, whether heap of ancient rubbish, or well-stored barn of honest pioneer.

The burning of "Emile," in 1763, with the Savoyard Vicar in its bosom, roused the dormant passions of the three classes in Geneva. Voltaire used all his influence and all his art to prevent the burning, and he exulted at the warmth of the popular protest against it. In August, 1763, he rejoiced at the spectacle of two hundred of the *bourgeois* marching to the Hôtel de Ville to convey this protest. A few days after, August 21, 1763, he writes to Damilaville, "It is good my brothers should know that yesterday six hundred persons went, for the third time, to protest in favor of Jean-Jacques against the Council of Geneva, who had dared to condemn the Savoyard Vicar." A considerable number of pastors, who had the discernment to see that Rousseau, upon the whole, favored their claim and cause, joined in these demonstrations.

In the heat of this contest over "Emile," Voltaire forgot all his antipathy to Rousseau. When the author of the Savoyard Vicar was obliged to fly from Paris, he again offered him a refuge. "M. de Voltaire," Wagnière records, "charged me to write to him and offer him, on his part, a little house and do-

main, called the Hermitage, which he possessed, near Ferney. I made seven copies of my letter, and addressed them to different places, not knowing where M. Rousseau had gone."

This conduct was the more noticeable from the previous relations between the two authors, which were far from amicable. We have seen Rousseau siding against Voltaire in his contest with the Calvinists on the drama. In June, 1760, he wrote a letter to Voltaire, of great length and heat, denying that it was any fault of his that their correspondence on that subject had been published, and charging upon Voltaire the supposed alienation of his countrymen from himself.

"I do not love you, sir," he said in this mad epistle; "you have brought upon me the very ills which could pain me most, — upon *me*, your disciple and your enthusiast. You have ruined Geneva, in return for the asylum you have received there; you have alienated from me my fellow-citizens, in recompense of the applause which I have lavished upon you among them. It is you who have rendered a residence in my country insupportable to me; it is you who will cause me to die in a foreign land, deprived of all the consolations of the dying, and to be thrown into the kennel as my only funeral rite, while all the honor which a man can hope for will accompany you in my country. I hate you, in fact, since you have wished it so; but I hate you as a man who is worthier far to love you, if you had so chosen. Of all the sentiments with which my heart was once penetrated for you, there remains only the admiration which cannot be refused to your beautiful genius, and my love for your writings."

Voltaire made no reply. His comment upon this letter, a few days after, was only too correct. "I have received," he tells Thieriot, June 13, 1760, "a long letter from Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He has become quite foolish [*fou*]; it is a pity." Some time after (February, 1761), to Madame d'Epinal: "As for Jean-Jacques, he is only a poor creature, who has abandoned his friends, and deserves to be abandoned by every one. He has nothing in his heart except the vanity to show himself amid the fragments of Diogenes' tub, and collect a mob about him that he may display his pride and his rags. It is a pity; for he was born with some half-talents, and he would perhaps have had a whole talent if he had been docile and

honest." Elsewhere he sweetly remarks that the dog of Erostratus, who fired the Ephesian dome, met one day the female dog of Diogenes, and thus started the noble line from which Jean-Jacques descended. He found opportunity, also, to insert in one of his numerous prefaces a prophecy concerning Rousseau, which ran over Europe, and was published in English periodicals of 1761: —

"In those days there will appear in France a very extraordinary person, come from the banks of a lake. He will say unto the people, All the men are virtuous in the country where I was born, and I will not stay in the country where I was born; and he will maintain that the sciences and the arts must necessarily corrupt our morals, and he will treat of all sorts of sciences and arts; and he will maintain that the theatre is a source of prostitution and corruption, and he will compose operas and plays. He will publish that there is no virtue but among the savages, though he never was among them; he will advise mankind to go stark naked, and he will wear laced cloths when given him. He will employ his time in copying French music, and he will tell you there is no French music. He will tell you that it is impossible to preserve your morals if you read romances; and he will compose a romance, and in this romance shall be seen vice in deeds and virtue in words, and the actors in it shall be mad with love and with philosophy."

A ludicrous burlesque of the "Nouvelle Héloïse" follows this introduction. But in 1762 Rousseau was a fugitive from Paris, and liable to prosecution in Geneva. Then, besides opposing with all his force the burning of "Emile," Voltaire offered the author a house near his own. At that time Rousseau, though but little past fifty, had nearly expended his sanity, and he returned, as Wagnière tells us, a churlish, abusive answer. "What a pity this man has lost his head!" said Voltaire, on reading it. Rousseau was then living in the dominions of the King of Prussia, an object of peculiar and universal curiosity, difficult for us to realize. Voltaire soon after learned that one of his workmen had lately come from Neuchâtel, near which Rousseau's retreat was supposed to be. It seems that the master of Ferney sought an interview with this stranger, and had with him a conversation, which the man reported to a friend of Rousseau, who wrote it out in a letter to Madame de Boufflers, in October, 1762: —

VOLTAIRE. — "You have in your country a certain personage of this, who has not managed his affairs very well."

WORKMAN. — "Who, then?"

VOLTAIRE. — "A certain Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Do you know him?"

WORKMAN. — "Yes, sir; I saw him one day at Butte in the carriage of M. de Montmollin, who rode with him."

VOLTAIRE. — "What! That scrub [*pied-plat*] in a carriage! He must be very proud, then?"

WORKMAN. — "Oh, sir, he goes also on foot. He runs like a lean cat, and climbs all our mountains."

VOLTAIRE. — "He may climb some day up a ladder. He would have been hanged at Paris if he had not run away; and he will be hanged if he comes here."

WORKMAN. — "Hanged, sir! He has the air of being so good a man! Eh, *mon Dieu*, what has he done, then?"

VOLTAIRE. — "He writes abominable books. He is an impious man, an atheist."

WORKMAN. — "You surprise me. He goes to church every Sunday."

VOLTAIRE. — "Ah, the hypocrite! And what do they say of him in that country? Will any one visit him?"

WORKMAN. — "Everybody, sir; everybody loves him. He is invited everywhere; and they say that my lord [the governor of Neuchâtel] pays him also many attentions."

VOLTAIRE. — "It is because my lord does not know him, nor you any more. Just wait two or three months, and you will know the man. The servants at Montmorency, where he lived, set off fire-works when he ran away to escape hanging. He is a man without faith, without honor, without religion."

WORKMAN. — "Without religion, sir! But they say that you have not much yourself."

VOLTAIRE. — "Who? I? *Grand Dieu!* And who is it that says that?"

WORKMAN. — "Everybody, sir."

VOLTAIRE. — "Oh! what a horrible calumny! I, who studied with the Jesuits! I, who have spoken of God better than all the theologians!"

WORKMAN. — "But, sir, people say that you have made many bad books."

VOLTAIRE. — "They lie. Let them show me a single one which bears my name, as those of this fellow [*croquant*] bear his."

This conversation, Rousseau wrote down from memory, after his informant had retained it two or three months. Doubtless the report is incorrect, though there are in it some Voltairean touches. Rousseau had seen his best days. David Hume, one of the best tempered men of his generation, procured him soon after an asylum and royal pension in England; but Rousseau quarreled with him also, and returned to perish miserably in France.

Meanwhile, his writings were having their natural effect in making the watchmakers of Geneva acutely conscious of their unhappiness, and more restive under the domination of the ruling class. Voltaire was already involved, in some degree, with them. He had been, from the beginning of his residence near Geneva, in almost continuous warfare against whatever was narrow and provincial in the laws and usages of the genuine sons of Calvin. He had forced the drama upon them, as we have seen. Whenever there had been a dispute or contention between the rigorists and the *relachés*, Voltaire had usually contrived in some way to come to the rescue of his natural allies. Thus, for example, in January, 1763, a few months before the burning of "Emile," there was an affair in which the rigorists were ludicrously discomfited through his assistance. Voltaire himself relates it in a letter to the D'Argentals: —

"See, my angels, if this will amuse you, and if it will amuse the Duke of Praslin. The men-servants of the French and English, or, rather, the French and English who are in Geneva, desired to give a ball to the maid-servants, in honor of the conclusion of peace. Their masters lavished money upon the preparations. Splendid dresses were made; the arms of England and France were blended; rockets, sweetmeats were prepared; fat chickens and fiddlers were gathered from twenty leagues around; ribbons, shoulder-knots, were made ready; and *Long Live the Dukes of Praslin and Bedford* [the negotiators] was to blaze out in a fine display of fire-works. The Square-Wigs of Geneva found that bad. They said that Calvin had expressly forbidden balls; that they knew the Scriptures better than the Duke of Praslin; that, besides, they had sold their contraband merchandise dearer during the war. In one word, after all the expense of the *fête* had been incurred, they prohibited it. Then the joyous band took a very wise course. You think, perhaps, they set fire to the city of Geneva. Not at all. They went and celebrated their orgies upon the territory of

France (they had not very far to go). Nothing was ever more gay, more splendid, or more pleasant. This, perhaps, will not appear so agreeable to you as it was to us; but we are serious people, whom the least things amuse."

Before this event had ceased to be a topic of conversation, he took sides against the rigorists in a notorious case, which he so managed as to bring upon them the laughter of Europe, and which remains to this day a diverting tale. A citizen of Geneva, Robert Covelle by name, a commonplace man of licentious character, was brought before the consistory to receive its solemn censure for an offense against morals. He confessed his fault; after which the president of the consistory ordered him to kneel, according to ancient custom, to receive a reprimand and to ask pardon. Robert Covelle would not bend the knee. He told the clergy that he needed a week for reflection to decide whether he could submit to the humiliating formality. When fifteen days had passed, he presented himself again before them, when he refused to humble himself in the manner required. He also offered a paper, in which he proved that the ecclesiastical laws did not prescribe the kneeling.

This document was a notable piece of composition; and, as Covelle was obviously deficient in the mental power requisite for such an argument, he was pressed to divulge the author. He owned, at length, that he had been taken to Ferney, and that Voltaire had induced him to promise to defy the consistory. Two or three citizens of Geneva, he stated, had been present on the occasion, had encouraged him to the defiance, and had procured for Voltaire the information necessary for the compilation of the document which he had just presented to the consistory. Robert Covelle was full of confidence. "I am now," he said to the chairman, "perfectly decided. Not only will I not submit to these gentlemen, but I am going to have this document against kneeling printed."

He was as good as his word, and the pamphlet had universal currency. Parties were inflamed. The clergy could only reply that a usage which had been practiced for centuries, and to which so many distinguished men had submitted, was more than equivalent to a mere paragraph of an ordinance. If the letter of the law did not prescribe kneeling, it was sufficiently sanctioned by use and propriety. The party of Vol-

taire maintained, on the other hand, that, even if the bending of the knee before a human court had been required by the written law, times had changed, and customs ought to change with them. A citizen of Geneva, they said, ought not to be subjected to a usage so painful; repentance being an affair between the individual conscience and the Sovereign Judge. The man who thinks that he has violated the divine law ought to humble himself, ought to kneel before his God; but, in accordance with the very words of Jesus Christ, this act should be performed in the profoundest secrecy, without witnesses, as no one is able to intervene between the creature who repents and the Creator who pardons.

The worthy pastor Gaberel, who reports this line of argument with undisguised approval, proceeds to say that the consistory would not yield the point to the demand of the people. Pamphlet upon pamphlet, he says, appeared; a collection of which fills three large volumes, still accessible in Geneva. Voltaire defended his client with all the weapons of his armory, satire, and argument, prose and verse. He wrote twelve public letters in the name of Robert Covelle; he allowed him a small pension; and, finally, he made him a leading character in his burlesque poem "The War of Geneva," a work which exhibits all the license of "La Pucelle," but not all its grace, variety, and comic force. This burlesque appeared one canto at a time, and pervaded the republic, no one knew how, until the whole poem was published in 1768, and overwhelmed with ridicule the consistory and the magnificent council, Jean-Jacques, the Calvinistic rigorists, and the whole conservative party. A few months after, the council took the matter out of the hands of the consistory by formally abolishing the usage of kneeling to receive clerical reprimand.

Thus, once more, after six years of effort, Voltaire triumphed. Covelle had been arraigned before the clergy February 23, 1763, and the decree abolishing the usage bears date February 9, 1769. He was not yet quite satisfied.

Covelle next claimed his right to be readmitted to the communion. The consistory replied that it was most willing to accept a true repentance, but that to prove his sincerity he must disavow publicly the twelve letters written in his name by Voltaire, and, above all, renounce the annual subvention of

three hundred francs which Voltaire allowed him for the privilege of printing in his name things impious and scandalous. Covelle denied the subvention; but, according to Gaberel, who had access to the records, the fact was proved against him. As he persisted in his denial, the consistory decided to have nothing more to do with him.[1]

At the height of this contest, the consistory had an opportunity to deal Voltaire a disagreeable blow in return. It was the Empress Catherine II. of Russia who gave them the opportunity,— a sovereign held in aversion by them and their allies. "The government of Geneva," M. Gaberel amusingly remarks, "was little disposed to favor the aggrandizement of a power already colossal," and Voltaire was much annoyed that, when the armies of Catherine were beaten by the Turks, two or three councilors illuminated their grounds. He hastened to complain of it to Prince Gallitzine, Russian ambassador at Paris. Soon, however, he had a more serious subject of complaint. The Empress sent to Geneva a certain M. de Bulow, to whom she gave a letter of introduction to Voltaire, and charged him to conduct to St. Petersburg a certain number of governesses and trained domestics, destined to the service of the imperial court. In the register of the council of August 20, 1765, we read :—

"M. Sales, syndic of the guard, having information that the Sieur de Bulow, colonel in the service of her majesty the Empress Catherine, has arrived in this city with a commission to engage some *demoiselles* for service in Russia, the syndic has been careful to observe his conduct. That officer has attempted to unsettle some persons; upon which the opinion of the council was that such engagements are opposed to our laws, which do not permit journeys of that kind, and they beg the Sieur de Bulow to desist voluntarily from his efforts, in order to save himself further trouble."

M. de Bulow took a lofty tone, and declared that he would not leave Geneva before he had fulfilled his mission, unless he was arrested by soldiers. His resistance was useless. Berne and Geneva united to prevent the emigration, and the envoy of Catherine had to leave without taking a single person with him. The council intrenched itself behind the law, which, however,

[1] Voltaire et les Genevois, par J. Gaberel, page 51. Paris, 1857.

did not prevent Genevan girls from accepting places as governesses in England.

Gaberel adds, "*There was another motive*, as Voltaire well knew. Angry at this *insolence*, as he termed it, he questioned M. Tronchin, who stood upon no ceremony in saying to the adorer of Catherine these significant words: 'M. de Voltaire, the council regards itself as the father of all the citizens; hence, it cannot suffer that its children should go to establish themselves at a court the sovereign of which is strongly suspected of having permitted her husband to be assassinated, and where the loosest morals prevail unchecked.'"

It appears from a letter to D'Argental that Voltaire contrived to send some girls to Russia, notwithstanding. "The Empress of all the Russias, sovereign of two thousand leagues of country and of three hundred thousand armed automatons who have beaten the Prussians, deigned to invite some women of Geneva to go and teach some young girls of Petersburg how to read and sew. The council of Geneva was imbecile and tyrannical enough to prevent its free citizens from going where they please, and insolent enough to expel from the city a lord sent by that sovereign! The Count de Schouvalof, who was at my house at the time, recommended those girls to me. Assuredly, I do not hesitate between Catherine II. and the Twenty-Five Bigwigs of Geneva. This affair has been very disagreeable to me. There are in that council three or four rascals [*coquins*], or, in other words, three or four fanatic devotees, who are good for nothing but to throw into the lake."

But, as usual, those three or four fanatic devotees had behind them a mass of the timid, prejudiced, rich, and old members, who are often useful as ballast and brake, though they render their vehicle extremely slow in moving onward. He was warmly supported in all these affairs by the liberal party of Genevans, themselves in ever-growing feud with the *coquins*, who "were only fit to be thrown into the lake," and who were about to put in peril both the prosperity and the independence of Geneva.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

HIS COLONY OF WEAVERS AND WATCHMAKERS.

VOLTAIRE began his direct interference in the politics of the little republic, in 1765, by an honest attempt to compose its party differences, which were becoming, as he thought, extreme and irrational.

The councilors, the bourgeois, and the natives, were all in the worst possible temper. Powerful neighbors, France, Germany, and remoter Prussia, looked languidly or laughingly upon what seemed a mere tempest in a teapot, little thinking that they were viewing the rehearsal of a tragedy soon to be presented on the great theatres of the world, and to be repeated many times. The first contention in which he took part was between the bourgeois and the councils. The bourgeois, grown rich in manufactures and trade, demanded a share of more direct political power: a voice in the selection of candidates for the councils, and an influence in their deliberations something more than a barren right of petition. The councilors repelled these demands with the usual haughtiness of a privileged order. The result was that both parties were in such violent irritation that reason lost its sway over passion, and all Geneva was in a kind of fury. This was toward the end of 1765, soon after the affair of the governesses, and even while Voltaire was still complaining to D'Argental of the conduct of the Twenty-Five in that matter. In writing to his angels, October 26, 1765, he said: —

"You believe, then, that I am wrong in taking part against the retention of the girls. I conceive well that it is not permitted to enroll soldiers or allure manufacturers; but I assure you that women who are of age have the legal right to travel, and that the manner in which the council treated a lord sent by Catherine is directly contrary to divine, human, and even Genevan laws. I was the more annoyed by it because the

Count of Schouvalof, who was very much interested in that affair, was then at my house. I assure you, moreover, that I have never associated with the members of the council of the minute republic of Geneva; for, except the Tronchins and two or three others, that tripod is composed of pedants of the sixteenth century. There is much more *esprit* and reason in the other citizens."

In writing upon the same subject, a day or two after, to the Russian ambassador at Paris, he said that party spirit had rendered some of the magistrates ridiculously hostile to France and to Russia. We observe that he excepts "the Tronchins and a few others." At this crisis a German author, who wrote on the part of the bourgeois, dedicated to him an ode, — "a very bad ode," he calls it; but it was followed by an intelligible history of the political contentions of Geneva. It was evident that the liberal party looked to him for aid as to a natural ally and champion of the oppressed. He at once determined to attempt the part of mediator between the embittered factions, and wrote a long letter to Councilor Tronchin, proposing that the heads of the two parties should dine together at his house, and endeavor to discuss their differences in a friendly manner. He had already given conciliatory repasts at Ferney, with some apparent benefit.

"I see with grief [he wrote to the councilor] the jealousies, the divisions, the uneasiness, in Geneva, increasing. Not that I fear those little emotions will lead to confusion and tumult; but it is sad to see a city filled with virtuous and well-informed men, who have all that is necessary for happiness, and yet not enjoying their prosperity. I am very far from believing that I can be useful; but I trust (perhaps I deceive myself) that it is not impossible to reconcile in some degree the discordant minds. Some citizens have come to my house, who seemed to unite moderation with clearness of view. In the present circumstances, I do not see that it would be malapropos if two or three of your most conciliatory magistrates should do me the honor to dine at Ferney, and that they should find it good that two of the wisest citizens should meet them on the occasion. I could, also, if you think it best, invite an advocate in whom both parties have confidence. Even though this interview should serve only to soften embittered feelings, and cause the parties to desire a necessary agreement, it would be much, and nothing but good could result from it. It does not belong to me to be the conciliator; I presume merely to take the liberty of

offering a repast, at which the guests might be able to come to an understanding. This dinner would not have the appearance of being premeditated; no one would be compromised; and I should have the advantage of proving my affectionate and respectful sentiments for you, monsieur, for all your family, and for the magistrates who honor me with their benevolence."

This letter being submitted to the Twenty-Five, they treated it as became "pedants of the sixteenth century." They ordered M. de Voltaire to be informed, by the civilest possible letter, that the council was not disposed to discuss the matter in any way. They had made up their minds; the subject was closed. Before the lord of Ferney had received this communication, a message was conveyed to him that four citizens (bourgeois) of Geneva desired to consult him upon the crisis. He sent a carriage for them; they dined with him. They showed such a moderate and reasonable spirit that he wrote again to the council, through their secretary, saying that he had good hopes of a conciliation. He imagined he saw in them an equal regard for the rights of the people and the just authority of the council. The council still declined to negotiate; but the bourgeois continued to frequent his house, where they met sometimes the intelligent members of the two councils. They requested him to draw up a basis of agreement, which he did, and submitted the draught to his Paris lawyers. All was in vain. The council, rather than yield so far as to discuss the claims of the bourgeois, appealed to France, and asked its mediation in this purely domestic difference. The French ministry appointed a commissioner, M. Hennin, to hear the parties and mediate between them.

The master of Ferney was relieved by this turn of affairs. "My angels," he wrote, December 2, 1765, "I assure you again that I am tired of losing my time in the attempt to reconcile the Genevans. I have given long dinners to the two parties. . . . . M. Hennin will perhaps find the suit finished, or will easily terminate it. My only part, as I have already said, has been to throw a little water upon the embers of Jean-Jacques Rousseau." There was need of a cooling influence, but it was not likely to come from the French government. The appeal to France appears to have inflamed the passions of the bourgeois to a degree that was not always controllable.

One of them, who had been drinking, met in the street one of Dr. Tronchin's French patients, president of a parliament, and gave him a tremendous box on the ear; as if in him he saw detested France incarnate. The mediation, in fact, did not prosper; the ill-feeling continued, increased, and issued, in 1770, in tumult and blood.

Voltaire, then, failed to reconcile the bourgeois with the aristocracy. He was next drawn into the equally hot dissension between the bourgeois and the natives; for the bourgeois were as resolute to keep the natives down as the councilors were to exclude the bourgeois. It was an illustration of the truth, now so familiar, that the oppressed naturally become oppressors.

In March, 1766, two natives came to Ferney to consult the defender of Calas and Sirven, and to ask his aid for their class. He received them politely. "Bring me," said he, "a detailed statement of your wrongs, and I will serve you with all the influence I have." They departed well pleased, called a secret meeting of their order, held many meetings in various places, attempted to agree upon a statement, but found literature a thorny path. Meanwhile, the syndics had heard of this audacious movement. They summoned one of Voltaire's visitors before them, and treated him with gross indignity. At length, the natives agreed upon a statement, and a delegation of three of their number conveyed it to Ferney: Auzière, watchcase-maker, Sylvestre, bookkeeper, and Pouzait, upholsterer. Voltaire received them and their Mémoire with every mark of consideration, read the paper with care, questioned them at much length, expressed a warm sympathy with their object, and dismissed them with words like these: —

"My friends, you constitute the most numerous class of an independent, industrious community, and you are in slavery. You ask only to be able to enjoy your natural advantages. It is just that you should be accorded a request so moderate. I shall serve you with all the influence I have over the plenipotentiary lords, and if you are forced to leave a country which prospers through your labor *I shall be able to serve and protect you elsewhere*." [1]

[1] 3 Mémoires Historiques et Politiques, par Isaac Cornaud, 45. Quoted in Voltaire et Genève, par Gustave Desnoiresterres, page 34.

Voltaire alluded to the "plenipotentiary lords" in this address. The first attempt on the part of France to mediate having failed, three new mediators were appointed, one by France, one by Berne, one by Zurich; all of whom were then in Geneva on the business of the mediation. Chief among them was the French commissioner, M. de Beauteville, who assumed all the importance of a plenipotentiary, lived at the "Hôtel de France," and had his secretary of legation and *attachés*. To these three "plenipotentiary lords" all Geneva was anxiously looking for a solution of distracting problems; and, meanwhile, each of the orders of the state, every public body, the clergy, the councils, the judges, were paying them visits of ceremony and presenting to them formal addresses. With Voltaire the whole of the French legation had become immediately intimate, and some of the diplomatic family were almost daily at his house. He spoke to the mediators on behalf of the natives, a body unknown to diplomacy. It then occurred to him that the natives, too, might very properly pay a ceremonial visit to the mediators, and present a written "compliment," as the councils, the consistory, the bourgeois, and other bodies had done. Elegant composition, he knew, was not their strong point, and he accordingly wrote their address for them: —

"Very Illustrious and very Excellent Lords, — The natives are tardy in taking the liberty to present their profound respects to your Excellencies. Deign to attribute to timidity alone our delay in presenting to you so just a mark of homage. Your affability, your indulgence, have given us the requisite courage. We flatter ourselves that your Excellencies will deign to cast upon us the benevolent regards with which you have favored all the orders of the state. We are the last to offer you our good wishes, but we were not the last to form them, and to thank Heaven for remitting to your hands the interests of our country."

Voltaire was well pleased with this effusion. He called it *fin, fin*. We can with difficulty realize the sly humor of it, because we cannot conceive how far the Genevans then were from regarding the natives as an "order of the state." "What is the third estate?" the Abbé Sieyès was soon to ask. In the republic of Geneva, in 1766, it was "nothing;"

and it was for this reason that Voltaire viewed with complacency so slight an effort of his pen. He enjoyed the anticipation of its effect upon those *coquins* of the Twenty-Five, those pedants of the sixteenth century.

On Sunday morning, April 20, 1766, at half past eleven, a deputation of four natives arrived at the French embassy, where, after some delays, they were received by the secretary of the legation. While the secretary was placing and preparing them for the audience, the mediator, M. de Beauteville, hearing the noise, burst into the room, his toilette incomplete, his spectacles on his nose. "Who is it that asks to see me?" he said, in the blunt manner of the old soldier. "It is messieurs the natives," replied the secretary, "who desire to present a compliment to monseigneur." "Where is it?" asked the mediator, holding out his hand. The spokesman, alas, had left the compliment at home, and stood speechless. After some time, he found his tongue, enlarged upon the unjust disabilities under which the natives suffered, and bestowed all his tediousness upon the mediator. M. de Beauteville replied that it was no part of his mission to rectify their wrongs; nor were they an order of the state, though belonging to it. The head of the delegation opened his eyes wide at this reply, and was launching into impetuous, ill-timed remonstrance, when the secretary contrived to parry him, and bring the audience to a polite and vague conclusion.

The four natives were much abashed by the morning's adventures, and looked forward with some apprehension to the comments of Voltaire. Happily, one of them conceived the idea of sending to Ferney a comic narrative of their interview with the French mediator; and the writer was so well pleased with his effort that he mounted horse on the same Sunday afternoon, and carried it himself to the château. The master, being engaged, wrote hastily upon a card, which Wagnière brought out to him: "Keep quiet. You shall hear from me to-morrow." And, in truth, on the day following, Auzière was summoned to Ferney, where Voltaire made him relate again the story of the Sunday's exploits. He complimented the natives upon their dexterity in introducing themselves to the nobility, and, after some further mockery, took a serious tone: —

"After all," said he, "the compliment was only a begin-

ning; but it is necessary to strike while the iron is hot. Here is a petition, which I have composed this night, in the name of the natives. Take it; go, and get together, if you can, all the natives; read it to them; and, above all, do not name me. Only, affect to say, with a mysterious air, that it comes from the hand of a powerful protector, who will be of more value to you than all the mediating lords put together. I know the people; these grand words impose upon them."

By four o'clock on the following day, fifteen hundred natives were at their usual place of meeting, three times as many as the room would hold; so that it was necessary to divide them into three companies, and read the petition to each in turn. Auzière began the reading with the word *messeigneurs*, a title which Voltaire gave to the mediators, according to the etiquette established. At once there rose a cry: "Not messeigneurs! not messeigneurs!" Other objections were made. The tone seemed too submissive, and the reader was obliged to promise to change, or cause to be changed, the several offensive expressions. The chiefs returned anxiously to Ferney, and reported to Voltaire the discontent of the natives with the petition he had written for them. So far from being displeased, he applauded the dignified sentiments of the artisans, and made all the changes desired by them with the utmost alacrity. Thus amended, the petition was sent to the mediators, but not until Voltaire had given the native leaders distinct warning that all their efforts would probably be fruitless. He foresaw but too clearly that if the mediators were disposed to advocate seriously their claims, the Genevan bourgeois and councils would unite against them.

"My friends," he said, and his words were remembered in Geneva for many years, — "my friends, you are not unlike those little flying-fish, which, out of the water, are eaten by birds of prey, or else, when they plunge again into the water, are devoured by the larger fish. You are between two parties equally powerful: you will be sacrificed to the interests of one or the other, or perhaps of both united."

So it proved. The petition was duly sent to the embassy, and even printed, together with the compliment previously forwarded. The four natives were summoned to the Hôtel de France, where their reception was by no means gracious

or assuring. M. de Beauteville being confined to his bed, the deputation was received by the secretary of legation, who by turns questioned and bullied them. "Who composed," he asked, in the severest tone, "the two pieces which you have sent me, and particularly the compliment?" One of the delegation entreated his Excellency to excuse any mistakes he may have found in the pieces, since they were written by simple workmen, very inapt in composition. The secretary thundered in reply, "It is not for want of *esprit* that I doubt this compliment to be of your composition. On the contrary, it is because I find too much in it that I am persuaded some one else lent you his pen." The delegation, we are told, stood silent and embarrassed, until the secretary said, in his most menacing manner, "Do you know that I shall make you rot in a dungeon if you have the audacity to conceal from me the truth?" One of them then confessed that Voltaire was the author of both documents, and the secretary dismissed them.

Their case was indeed hopeless. A few days after, a horseman came galloping to Ferney with the news that Auzière had been arrested and was in prison. The claim of the natives was evidently regarded by the ruling classes as too preposterous for serious consideration. Auzière was soon released. The lord of Ferney continued to receive and advise the natives from time to time, but assured them always that so long as they remained within the territory of Geneva he could do nothing effectual for them. He invariably ended his interviews by saying, "If the hardness of your masters compels you to abandon your native country, *then come to me.*"

According to his own account, his efforts to conciliate the parties had the usual effect of satisfying neither.

"As to the comedy of Geneva," he wrote to D'Argental, "it is a cold, complicated piece, which begins to bore me severely. For some time past I have been serving as consulting advocate. I have always advised the Genevans to be more gay than they are, to establish the theatre among them, and to learn how to be happy with the four millions of revenue which they draw from France. The spirit of contumacy is in this family."

. . . . "I have then declared to the council, to the bourgeois, and to the natives that, not being a church warden of

their parish, it did not become me to mingle in their affairs, and that I had enough business of my own. I have given them a good example of pacification in arranging my tithes with my parish priest, and finishing, by a stroke of the pen, with the help of a few louis d'or, some troublesome disputes of a hundred years' standing."

One incident of the mediation was highly diverting. We have already seen how Voltaire frustrated the Genevan pedants in the matter of the drama by building a theatre at Châtelaine, on French soil, a few yards from the boundary line. That theatre was still amusing the "sombre children of Calvin," in 1766, when the plenipotentiary lords arrived at Geneva. Voltaire saw his opportunity for a more unequivocal triumph over them. He told the story of his theatre to M. de Beauteville. A few days after, the French mediator asked the council of Twenty-Five, as a favor to himself and his colleagues, that the Châtelaine company should be allowed to play in Geneva. At first, the council, though it was a party point with them to conciliate the French mediator, dared not give its consent; but still less did they dare refuse. After hesitation, they yielded, and the drama was allowed in the city of Calvin. The exultation of the author of "Zaïre" at this triumph breaks out in his letters: "The theatre is in Geneva! In vain has Jean-Jacques played in this affair the part of a crack-brain; the plenipotentiaries have given him the whip publicly. As to the preachers, they dare not raise their heads. When 'Tartuffe' is played, the people seize with transport the allusions which touch them."

His triumph, M. Gaberel thinks, was short, as he was unable to foresee that in the year 1879 there would be opened in Geneva one of the finest theatres in Europe. In February, 1768, when the drama had been established there less than two years, toward six in the evening, as our pastor relates, a cry of fire was heard in Geneva. "Every one," he adds, "ran, pail in hand, according to usage. But when the people, both men and women, saw where the fire was, they poured away their pails of water, saying, 'Ah, it is the theatre that is burning! Very well, my fine gentlemen, let those who want it put it out!'" The building was burned to the ground. When Voltaire heard of the refusal of the people to assist, he said,

"Oh, that Geneva! When you think you have it, it escapes you. Magistrates and people, — they are all alike [*perruques et tignasses, c'est tout un*]."

Happily, the Châtelaine was left, and the company of players returned thither. Fourteen years passed before the theatre was rebuilt in Geneva.

Such events as these did not allay the political irritation. The strife of parties continued in Geneva, and became more and more intense and embittered. The mediation utterly failed. French troops were quartered along the lake, in Gex, in order to reduce the little republic by blockade. Business languished; many of the natives, well-skilled silk-weavers and watchmakers, were idle; provisions grew dearer. For a short time Ferney itself was with difficulty supplied with the necessaries of life, until the Duke of Choiseul sent an order excepting the château from the general rule, because, as he wrote, its master was "infinitely excepted in his heart." The natives then found out what Voltaire had meant when he kept saying to them, in many forms of language, "When you can no longer bear the insolence of your employers, come to me, and I will protect you elsewhere." Within a few months of their first consulting him, he began to build houses in the village of Ferney, such as watchmakers and stocking-weavers might occupy to advantage. In May, 1767, he could already write to his angels, "I have founded a colony at Ferney, where I have established tradesmen, artists, and a surgeon, and where I am building houses."

Tenants presented themselves faster than he could get houses ready for them. To his silk-stocking weavers he lent money, as Wagnière reports, on very easy terms, "four per cent.," and gave them the full benefit of his knowledge of business, markets, exchange, modes of transport; enabling them to buy their raw materials at the best times, places, and prices, and to send their products where they were most in request. In 1770, when the obstinate pride of these fanatic rigorists, pedants of the sixteenth century, had its natural issue in tumult and blood, great numbers of watchmakers fled from the city, and sought refuge at Ferney. Voltaire opened his arms and his house to them. He gave shelter to as many as he could; he surrendered his theatre to them; he pushed

on the completion of houses, and ordered the building of more. The theatre he fitted up as a watch factory, and "in six weeks," as he says, his fugitives had watches for sale. In all, he built at Ferney about a hundred houses, most of which, Wagnière tells us, were sold to tenants, on condition of their paying a rent of five, six, or seven per cent. of the cost during Voltaire's life, and half as much, after his death, during the life of Madame Denis. He was of great service to his watchmakers in buying gold, silver, and jewels, for their manufacture, on better terms than Genevan makers could compass. For forty years he had been interested in commerce with the countries which supply those commodities; he knew precisely where, when, how, and of whom to buy them.

The tact, the energy, the enthusiasm, with which he promoted this enterprise of "founding a city in the desert" has filled the later volumes of his correspondence with amusing letters. Nothing but the brevity of human life prevented his actually building a city upon the site of his village, and drawing into it the vital currents that had given a century of prosperous growth to Geneva. He knew how to deal with human beings; he had at Ferney no pedants of the sixteenth century to interfere with him; and, as long as the King of France was governed by mistresses, he would always be able to place a few verses of epigrammatic compliment where they would do his watchmakers much good. He thought at one time of naming his city "Choiseul," in honor of the minister to whom he was indebted for many substantial services. Perhaps he abandoned the idea on learning that the mistress and the minister were mortal enemies. Happily, before the mistress had exiled the minister, Ferney had received from both the Duke and Duchess of Choiseul much of the aid which an infant colony needs.

It was the amiable and witty Duchess of Choiseul who wore the first silk stockings woven upon the looms of Ferney; for he was resolved to give his new wares the advantage which he had procured for his opinions, namely, the approval of "good company." The duchess was a little creature. Without telling her why, he asked her for the measure of her foot, and, in reply, she offered to send him a pair of her shoes. "Madame," he replied, "you are unlike ordinary ladies; you

give at once more than you are asked for. I need only one of your shoes, quite enough for an old hermit, and you deign to offer me two. Only one, madame, only one. There is never anything said in the romances except of *a* shoe; and observe that Anacreon says, 'I would like to be your *shoe*.' Have, then, the goodness, madame, to send me one shoe, and you shall then know why."

The shoe arrived. The lady, unable to guess his object, appears to have sent him a very large shoe, or easy slipper. He wrote, "I have received the shoe with which it has pleased your greatness to gratify me. It is one foot and half an inch long; and, as I have heard that your figure is of the best proportions, it is clear that you must be seven feet three inches and a half high. Add to this stature the two inches and a half of your heel, and we have a lady seven feet six, — a very advantageous height. People may say as much as they please of the Venus de Medicis being little, but Minerva was very large."

He sent the stockings, at length, informing her that his own silk-worms had produced the material of which they were made, and that his own hands, together with those of young Calas, had woven them. "Deign," he wrote, "to wear them, madame, one single time; then show your legs to whomsoever you wish, and if they do not confess that my silk is stronger and more beautiful than that of Provence and Italy I renounce the trade. Afterwards, give them to one of your women; they will last her a year."

As soon as the stockings had been sent, and this pretty letter with them, the "true shoe" of the duchess arrived, which he acknowledged in another letter worth several pairs of shoes. The duchess wore his stockings, and so much to the advantage of his weavers that when, in the following year, the watchmakers began their operations in his theatre he sent her six elegant specimens of their work. He pretended to send these watches to the *femme-de-chambre* of the duchess, and addressed his letter as if he were writing to that important personage: —

"Mademoiselle, we Capuchins are like the lovers in comedies, who address themselves always to the maids, in order to introduce themselves to the mistress. I take, then, the liberty of troubling you with

these lines, to ask you if we could take the extreme liberty of sending from our convent to the Duchess of Choiseul the six watches we have first made at Ferney. We believe them very pretty and very good; but all authors have that opinion of their works. We have thought that, in the season of marriage and festival, these products of our manufacture might be given as presents, either to the artists who may serve at those festivals, or to persons attached to the Dauphiness [Marie Antoinette]. Doubtless, their low price will please the Abbé Terray, since there are some watches among them which will cost only eleven louis each, and the dearest, set with diamonds, is put as low as forty-seven louis. The one with the portrait of the king in enamel and diamonds is only twenty-five louis, and the one in which is a portrait of the Dauphin, with one of the hands set with diamonds, is only seventeen. At Paris all these would cost a full third more.

"Some persons who know court secrets assure us that the minister for foreign affairs [Choiseul] and the first gentleman of the chamber [Richelieu] make presents in the king's name on this occasion; but we do not know how to proceed in order to obtain the influence of your benevolent mistress; we fear that she will take us for impertinent people, who do not know what is becoming. Nevertheless, charity compels us to represent that it is necessary to aid our nascent colony at Ferney, which is composed at present of only sixty persons, who have nothing but their ten fingers to live upon.

"A colony and a manufactory, mademoiselle, are terrible things. We hope that your indulgent mistress will have pity upon us, notwithstanding the disagreeable things we have said to her. We are importunate, it is true, but you know that it is necessary to take the kingdom of heaven by violence, as another says. So, mademoiselle, we ask your powerful influence with the duchess, and we shall pray for her and for you, which will bring you great benefit. I entreat you on my own part, mademoiselle, to place me at her feet, which are fourteen royal inches long.

"I have the honor to remain, mademoiselle, your very dear brother,
FRANCOIS, Unworthy Capuchin."

"Permit me, mademoiselle, to add to my letter that if monseigneur the duke, or madame the duchess, would show to the king the watch set with diamonds, with three *fleurs-de-lis*, and the one which bears his portrait, he would be astonished that such things could be done in our village."

The duchess was well capable of doing her part in a gay correspondence of this nature. Her reply was written in the

name of two of her maids, Angélique and Marianne. It was in excellent taste and temper.

The absence of the duchess from Paris at the critical moment delayed the success of this little negotiation, but only delayed it. The minister bought the watches for the king, and used them in such a way as to advertise the new establishment most effectively. It is true, he omitted the form of paying for them; and, as he went soon afterwards out of office, the lord of Ferney was obliged to perform that duty for him. Voltaire was emboldened by the purchase to send to the ambassadors of France in foreign countries a kind of circular letter, recommending the Ferney watches to their protection: —

"Monseigneur, — I have the honor to inform your Excellency that the bourgeois of Geneva having, unfortunately, assassinated some of their fellow-citizens, and many families of good watchmakers having fled to a small estate which I possess in Gex, and the Duke of Choiseul having placed them under the protection of the king, I have had the happiness to put them in a condition to exercise their talents. They are the best artists of Geneva; they make all the varieties, and at a price more moderate than at any other manufactory. They produce in enamel all the portraits with which watch cases are usually adorned. They merit all the more the protection of your Excellency because they have much respect for the Catholic religion. It is under the auspices of the Duke de Choiseul that I entreat your Excellency to favor them, whether in giving them your orders, or in deigning to have them recommended to wholesale dealers of the best credit. I pray you, monseigneur, to pardon the liberty I take, in consideration of the advantage resulting to the kingdom from this enterprise."[1]

He soon had the pleasure of announcing to his angels and others that prosperity was smiling upon his colony. The village presented a busy scene. "That theatre which you know," he wrote to one of his recent military visitors, "is changed into workshops. Where verses were formerly declaimed now gold is melted and watch wheels are polished. We must build new houses for the emigrants; for all the workmen of Geneva would come here if we had room to lodge them."

The King of Prussia invited to Berlin eighteen families of the fugitive watchmakers of Geneva, binding himself to give them free lodging for twelve years, to exempt them from all

[1] Ménage et Finances de Voltaire, page 296. Paris, 1854.

taxation during that period, and to pay premiums for the apprentices whom they might instruct. It was thus that the watchmaking industry was founded in Berlin.

Before the end of the first year of watchmaking at his village, we see him sending to the Countess d'Argental a beautiful watch circled with diamonds, with the hands set in diamonds, all in the most exquisite style; "done," as he remarked, "by one of the best workmen in Europe." He vaunts in several letters the skill and taste of his artists in adorning their watches with diamonds, a fashion long ago abandoned. In 1773 he sent to the Countess Dubarry one of these glittering toys, with a letter in the style of the period, as obsolete now as watches blazing with gems.

Could he fail to mention the colony to his constant and admiring correspondent, Catherine II. of Russia? Her imperial reply was, "Send me watches of every kind, to the value of some thousand roubles; I will take them all." He communicated this vaguely magnificent order to his watchmakers, who, it appears, interpreted it too liberally. The empress said *some* thousands of roubles. They sent her eight thousand roubles' worth of watches. "I have scolded those poor artists severely," he wrote to the empress; "they have abused your goodness. I take the liberty, above all, to pray you, madame, not to pay all at once the sum of thirty-nine thousand two hundred and thirty-eight livres of France, which is the total of the two invoices. You are obliged to incur expenses so enormous that it is absolutely necessary to put a rein upon your generosity. Though my colonists should have to wait a year for half the amount, I should regard them as too fortunate, and I take upon myself the task of recommending patience to them. If your majesty is content with the goods and the prices, my makers say that they will execute whatever you may order."

What could an imperial lady reply to such a letter? "This expense will not ruin me," said she. "It would be very unfortunate for me if I was so reduced as not to have little sums of money wherever and whenever I happen to want them. I pray you not to judge of our finances by those of other states of Europe; you would do me wrong. Although the war with Turkey has lasted three years, we are still building, and every-

thing else goes on as in perfect peace." In a few weeks the money came from the empress, to the great joy of all the colony. By this time there were four firms of watchmakers at Ferney, and some of them began the manufacture of clocks also. Upon receiving this large sum from the Empress Catherine, it did not again occur to Voltaire to put a rein upon her generosity. After thanking her for the money in the name of his artists, he added, "I do not remember to have spoken to you of a pendulum clock we are now making; but if you wish one, you shall have it immediately. Your majesty has only to name the price, and I will answer for it that you shall be well served, and cheaply, too. This is perhaps not the time to propose a commerce of clocks and watches with China; but your universality does all things at once, and, in my opinion, that is the true greatness, the true power." He then sketched a plan for opening a trade with China in Ferney clocks and watches, under the auspices of the empress. She fell in with his suggestion, and directed him how to proceed.

The empress favored him also in other ways. He asked her for some seeds of the hardy Siberian cedar for his park. She replied, in December, 1771, "I shall send you immediately some nuts of the cedar of Siberia. I have had the governor directed to send them to me perfectly fresh. You will have them towards spring."

His perseverance in forcing the clocks and watches of Ferney upon the markets was extraordinary. If one request was fruitless, he wrote again and again, with increasing urgency. His rosy and jovial companion of other days, Cardinal de Bernis, was then living in magnificent profusion at Rome, as the ambassador of the King of France. To him Voltaire not only sent his circular letter, but was upon the point of consigning to him, through the Duke of Choiseul, a case of watches for sale in the imperial city. He wrote thus to the cardinal, in May, 1770: "The good work which I entreat from your Eminence is, simply, to deign to order one of your *valets de chambre*, or some other person in your confidence, to seek out an honest merchant, established at Rome, who may be willing to be our correspondent. I answer for it that he will find it to his advantage. The undertakers of the manufacture will send him an invoice as soon as you shall have accorded the favor which we ask of you."

De Bernis overlooked this important commission. Voltaire had the patience to wait eight months, and then remonstrated with the cardinal ambassador in the manner following: —

"I cannot help saying to you that you have profoundly afflicted me. I have not deserved this hardness on your part, and I mention it to you with extreme grief. Apparently, you have believed that my colony is only a poetic license. There is not a single ambassador who has not been solicitous to procure for us correspondence in foreign countries. You are the only one who has not had that goodness, and you have disdained to reply to me. What would it have cost you to have had one word said to the consul from France, whom you have at Rome? I expected this favor, from the benevolence which you have shown me. If you had wished, for yourself or for some one of your friends, a pretty watch, as good as those of England, and at only half the cost of English watches, you would have had it in ten days by the Lyons post."

What wonder that the watchmaking throve? He was justified in saying to the Duke of Richelieu, "Give me a fair chance, and I am the man to build a city." In three years the watches, clocks, and jewelry from Ferney went regularly to Spain, Algiers, Italy, Russia, Holland, Constantinople, Morocco, America, China, and Portugal, besides a large number of watches to Paris, upon which the dealers there, as the lord of Ferney bitterly complained, "had the impudence to put their own names." By way of adapting his wares to their market, he procured, through the ambassadors, portraits of reigning kings, queens, and heirs apparent of the different countries, with which to adorn the watches consigned to them. Occasionally, of course, heavy losses occurred in dealing with regions so remote, and those losses fell upon himself. His caution, however, and the unrelenting vehemence with which he upheld and enforced the claims of his artists kept his losses within moderate bounds.

The success of the enterprise was proportioned to the ability and zeal of the founder. In 1773 the "artists" of Ferney sold four thousand watches, worth half a million francs, besides clocks, jewelry, and silks. In 1774, upon taking stock, they found that they had goods, machinery, and materials worth four hundred and fifty thousand francs. In 1775 the popula-

tion was twelve hundred. In 1776 the product amounted to six hundred thousand francs. Some of the manufacturers were beginning to accumulate property, and to buy or build houses for themselves, some of which cost more than twelve thousand francs.

Among the relics of this colony there is preserved the advertisement or circular issued by the first firm of watchmakers who settled in Ferney, and occupied the theatre as a workshop. This circular Voltaire was accustomed to inclose in his letters to ambassadors, kings, ministers, and empresses, to whom he recommended the wares specified, from "plain silver," at three louis, to repeaters, at forty-two louis. It is probable that the author of "Zaïre" had a hand in the composition of this prospectus. To style the little group of dependent fugitives working in his dismantled theatre THE ROYAL MANUFACTORY OF FERNEY, and to print the words in capital letters, was very much in his manner; as was also his hint to other natives of Geneva that a gracious King of France was waiting to favor and exempt them also, if they chose to come out from under the arrogance of the bourgeois sons of Calvin. He was the man to build a city; Chicago would have valued him.

In many letters, as well as, occasionally, in his works, he dwells upon the perfect friendship in which his colonists lived together. In 1776 he wrote: —

"A thing which, I believe, deserves some notice is that, though this colony was composed of Catholics and Protestants, it would have been impossible to divine that there were in Ferney two different religions. I have seen the wives of the Genevan and Swiss colonists prepare with their own hands *reposoirs* for the procession of the festival of the holy sacrament. They took part in this procession with profound respect; and M. Hugonet, the new curé of Ferney, a man as tolerant as he is generous, thanked them publicly for it in his sermon. When a Catholic was sick, Protestants went to take care of him, and in their turn received from him the same assistance. It was the fruit of the principles of humanity which M. de Voltaire had inculcated in all his works, and, particularly, in his 'Treatise upon Tolerance.' He always said that men are brothers, and he proved it by facts. 'Do you see,' he would say to the travelers who came to see him, 'that inscription upon the church which I built? DEO EREXIT VOLTAIRE. To God,

the common father of all men.' In fact, this was perhaps the only church among us dedicated to God alone."[1]

In writing to Madame du Deffand of his colony and its brilliant success, he says, "All this I have done from pure vanity. God, as we are assured, made all things for his own glory; we must imitate him as far as we can." In 1824, when Albert Gallatin visited his native city, he testified to the completeness of the victory over ancient prejudice: "Speaking of old bourgeois, the distinction does not exist; *citoyens*, *bourgeois*, and *natifs* are, in every respect, civil and political, on the same footing."

[1] Commentaire Historique sur les Œuvres de l'Auteur de la Henriade. 2 Œuvres de Voltaire, 195.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

PRIVATE LIFE AT FERNEY.

LET us pay our respects first to the lady of the house, Madame Denis. She did not remain very long at Paris, in consequence of the explosion of March, 1768, but returned to Ferney in October, 1769. Madame d'Epinai's description of this lady is familiar to many: —

"Voltaire's niece is enough to make one die of laughing. She is a fat little woman, as round as a ball, of about fifty; ugly, good-humored, an enormous liar, without ill-intention or ill-nature, without talent, while seeming talented; forever screaming at the top of her voice, laying down the law, talking politics, tagging verses, reasoning, unreasonable. All this without too much pretension, and without giving any offense to any one. Through all peeps out a pervading tinge of partiality for the male sex. She adores her uncle, both as uncle and as man. Voltaire loves her, laughs at her, and holds her in reverence."

Such she may have really appeared to a distinguished guest of a few days, and such, indeed, she was when in equilibrium. But she occasionally lost her equilibrium, and stormed about the château like a tornado. Of all the tastes and pursuits of her uncle there was only one with which she sympathized; but, also, that one was his first and last love, the drama. She wrote a comedy, and escaped through him the disaster of having it played; she began, and perhaps finished, a tragedy. She played so well that her uncle went the length of comparing her with Clairon, much to the amusement of his correspondents. But they had few other interests in common. She had no taste for the delights of the country; she was not moved by the troubles or the triumphs of the Ferney watchmakers; science and history were naught to her; and, as to *l'Infâme*, it was indifferent to her whether the monster were crushed or

inflated. Madame Denis was a child of Paris and a votary of its commoner pleasures. During her husband's life-time she had lived in a garrisoned town, where, as she wrote in 1738 to Thieriot, "I have a good house and four hundred officers at my disposal, who are all very obliging, and among whom I find a dozen amiable, who often sup with me." Afterwards, she was a gay widow in Paris for many years, with a considerable revenue and great prestige. Hence she endured Ferney so long as it was filled with guests and tumult, and pined always for a hotel at Paris.

Her uncle bore her humors with the patience of a philosopher who had lived sixteen years with a Marquise du Châtelet; and even when she had carried her violence too far he was placable. After her abrupt departure from Ferney, in 1768, he wrote of her conduct with charitable forbearance to his niece, Madame de Florian, and her husband: —

"It is just and necessary, my dear Picards [they were then living in Picardy], that I should speak to you with confidence. You see the sad effects of temper. You know how much of it Madame Denis has sometimes shown to you. Recall the scene which M. de Florian experienced. She has made me experience one not less cruel. It is lamentable that neither her reason nor her ordinary amiability can assuage in her soul those violent tempests of passion which overturn, sometimes, and desolate society. I am persuaded that the secret cause of those violences which escaped her from time to time was her natural aversion to a country life, — an aversion which could only be mitigated by a great crowd of company, by festivals and magnificence. This tumultuous life suited neither my age of seventy-four years, nor the feebleness of my health. Moreover, I found myself much embarrassed by the delay of the Duke of Wurtemburg, the Marshal de Richelieu and other great lords in paying my annuities (amounting to a suspension of a hundred thousand francs a year). She has gone to Paris to collect some of the remains, while I occupy myself with the affairs of Germany. Notwithstanding this actual derangement of my affairs, I allow her at Paris twenty thousand francs per annum, in addition to her own revenue of twelve thousand."

With Madame Denis went not only the crowd of guests that filled the château, but also Marie Corneille and her husband, who seldom again lived long at Ferney. When, after an absence of twenty months, Madame Denis returned, Wagnière did not rejoice to see her again at the head of the estab-

lishment. Such ladies are trying to good servants. "She returns, doubtless," said he, "to quarrel again with her uncle." It was his opinion that if she had remained at Paris, instead of drawing her uncle thither, he would have lived some years longer than he did. We are to imagine her, then, the mistress of the house once more, a round, bustling, boisterous dame of sixty, happy in the midst of gay company, from which her uncle as gladly escaped.

The lord of the château claims our regards next. The good Wagnière has scattered throughout his volume several pleasing recollections of his chief, to which the reader is entitled. He saw Voltaire at all times and in all circumstances. From fourteen he grew up in his house, married in it, reared in it those children of his who played about the room while their father plied the too assiduous pen to Voltaire's dictation. He gives us many details of life in the interior which but for him would have remained unknown. He, too, like other inmates, scouts the idea of his lord being avaricious. He reports him careful, exact, and vigilant in affairs of business, not disposed to yield a sou of a claim, and a stickler for the lowest price; but, at the same time, bountiful in hospitality, lenient to poor debtors, and practically helpful to the unfortunate.

HIS LOVE OF THE DRAMA.

"No one understood better than M. de Voltaire all the niceties of the art of declamation. When some of his pieces were rehearsed in his presence, he was almost continually beside himself, so warmly did he enter into the various passions. It often happened that he repeated the whole piece himself. Once, at a representation of 'Zaïre,' in which he played the part of Lusignan, at the moment of his recognition of his children, he was so overcome with emotion that he forgot his part, and the prompter, who was also crying, could not give him the word. M. de Voltaire improvised half a dozen new and extremely fine verses. Unfortunately, I could not write them down at the moment, nor those which he composed while playing Zopire, in the scene with Mahomet, nor those which he added on the stage to his part of Trissotin, in the 'Femmes Savantes,' in the scene with Vadius, which were very comic. He did not remember them himself a moment after. The same thing happened in several other parts which I saw him play. I heard him also, after a performance at Tourney, speak a good while in verse to M. Marmontel, who, astonished, remained silent, and knew not what to reply to him.

"A very singular thing was that no one learned his own verses with more difficulty than himself. This arose, doubtless, from the impetuosity of his imagination, which continually mastered him to such a degree that, in the greatest warmth of a conversation in which he seemed wholly absorbed, or at a time when he appeared the most interested in a game of chess (the only game he liked), he would send for me to write out some verses which he had just composed, or some ideas which had occurred to him; and if I did not arrive instantly he would run to write them himself in his memorandum book, or upon the first scrap of paper he could lay hands on.

"He had an astonishing facility in composing verses, which he usually wrote with his own hand, when the work was of some length. He never (or seldom) wrote out a plan of his plays. After having arranged the plan in his head, he executed it at the same time that he wrote the verses. His letters, his prose works, and his short pieces of poetry he dictated with such rapidity that very often I was obliged to ask him to stop, as I could not write fast enough to keep up with him. He even read while dictating.

"What plainly showed, in my opinion, the extent and force of genius in this extraordinary man was that I very often saw him correct in the same hour proofs of history, plays, philosophy, metaphysics, tales, and romances, making in each corrections and considerable additions with the greatest facility, notwithstanding the extreme diversity of the subjects.

"Although he learned and retained with difficulty his own verses, he knew by heart all the good verses of the other poets, and often recited them with enthusiasm. When he was present at the representation of their dramas, he would be heard reciting in a low tone the beautiful passages before the actors had pronounced them; and when they declaimed them badly he would say, in an under-tone, 'Ah! the wretch! the hangman! To murder in that way the beauties of Corneille or Racine!' When, on the contrary, those passages were well delivered, he would often cry out, and pretty loudly, too, 'Beautiful! Admirable!' And this he would do, no matter who the author was, although he was accused of jealousy towards all. It was a little disagreeable to be seated next to him at the theatre, because he could not contain himself when he was strongly moved. Tranquil at first, he grew warm by degrees; his voice, his feet, his cane, were more or less audible. He would rise half-way from his chair, then seat himself again. All at once he would stand erect, appearing to be six inches higher than he really was. It was then that he made the most noise. Professional actors, for this reason, dreaded to play before him. He could not endure to hear people declaim or read beautiful verses

badly; still less that they should criticise them too minutely or unjustly.

"I shall relate on this subject a little anecdote. M. de Voltaire, after dinner, used to go into the drawing-room, where, ordinarily, he remained an hour or two with his guests, after which he would retire, and go into his study to work until supper-time; or, if the weather was fine, especially in summer, he would get into his old carriage, with a blue body sprinkled with stars of gold, with mouldings carved and gilt, to enjoy the pleasure of a ride into the country, or in his forest, — sometimes alone, sometimes with a friend, or with ladies of the company. One day, after he had gone to ride, a discussion arose in the drawing-room upon the difficulties of French poetry, upon its beauties and defects. A literary man sustained that in the passages the most perfect French poetry was still filled with faults. To prove it, he took up a volume of Racine which was lying upon the mantelpiece, selected one of the most beautiful scenes, and with his pencil marked with a cross all the verses which he considered defective. The next day M. de Voltaire, while returning this volume to his library, opened it by chance. He saw all those crosses, and, being very much put out, wrote at the bottom of the page that had the most crosses, 'Ah, hangman! if I had you, I would teach you to crucify in this way the inimitable Racine!'"

HIS LITERARY HABITS.

"The memory of M. de Voltaire was wonderful. A hundred times he has said to me, 'Look into such a work, into such a volume, about such a page, and see if there is not such a thing!' It rarely happened that he was mistaken, although he may not have opened the book in twelve or fifteen years.

"He had a way, when he received a new work, to run over it rapidly, reading some lines of each page. If he perceived something which merited attention, he would place a mark opposite; after which, he would read the whole again very attentively, and even twice, when the work appeared to him interesting and well written; and he also made remarks in the margin. Some of these were very curious. There was a prodigious quantity of slips of paper in his books, upon which there were some words written with his own hand or mine. He was naturally gay and sprightly, and this is why a certain habit of his always struck me. During conversations or discussions upon serious or important subjects, he would remain a long while without saying anything, listening to every one else, his head leaning forward, and seeming to be in a kind of stupor or imbecility. When the disputants had nearly exhausted their arguments, he seemed to rouse him-

self, and would begin by discussing their opinions with order and precision, then advance his own. By degrees we would see him grow warm, until, at length, he was no longer the same man; there appeared in all his person something of the supernatural, and the company was carried away by the vehemence of his discourse, by his action, and by the force of his reasoning."

HIS MORAL QUALITIES.

"It was the same with his anger; it came upon him only by degrees, and it was necessary, as it were, to force him to it. It was always the effect of repeated offenses and long resistance to his wishes. But his pity, his sensibility, were as prompt as they were genuine, although his enemies have so often said the contrary. My gratitude owes him this just testimony, and certainly no one more than myself had the opportunity of knowing his real character and the goodness of his heart. Although he was of a disposition extremely sensitive, I have never known any one more open to reason than he, and who yielded to reason with more readiness, although at first he may have been of a different opinion. I cannot say too much of his moral qualities, the possession of which has been so often and so unjustly denied to him.

"All Europe knew the interest which he took in several famous trials; but there were many other acts which equally proved his humanity, though little known beyond the limits of Ferney, and sometimes not even beyond his own house. Two of his servants had stolen from him articles of considerable value, and the police, who had been informed of the fact by public rumor, had begun to make inquiries. Meanwhile, M. de Voltaire, having learned where those people were concealed, charged me at once to go and find them, and to tell them to avoid hanging by an immediate flight, since, if they were arrested, he would not be able to save their lives. He told me also to give them the money necessary to facilitate their escape and pursue their journey. I added, by his order, that he was satisfied of their repentance, and that he hoped his indulgence would induce them to reform. Those wretched men were touched, and voluntarily mentioned where some of the stolen goods were hidden. They succeeded in escaping the next night, and in reaching a foreign country. Long after, M. de Voltaire learned that from that time they had conducted themselves honestly, although they had been hanged in effigy.

"A man who had done a great deal of harm in the village was at length detected. Upon the point of being arrested, he tried the plan of coming with his wife to implore the forgiveness of M. de Voltaire. They threw themselves at his feet in despair, crying and protesting

their repentance. M. de Voltaire was so much moved that he could not restrain his tears, and knelt himself to lift them up, saying to them, 'Go upon your knees before God, and not before me, who am only a man. Away with you! I forgive you, and do so no more.'

"All his colonists adored him. Upon his recovery from a serious illness in 1775, all the inhabitants of Ferney were so transported with joy that the young people formed themselves into military companies, both of dragoons and infantry, and gave some very pretty *fêtes*. On St. Francis' Day there was a superb illumination of all Ferney, with a fine display of fire-works given by Madame Denis. The young people came every Sunday to dance in his château, where they were provided with all sorts of refreshments. He would come to see them dance, cheered them on, and shared the joys of his colonists, whom he called his children. One of the companies of dragoons, at the time of that convalescence of which I have just spoken, caused a gold medal to be struck, bearing the portrait of M. de Voltaire, to be given to the man who should show the most skill in the musket exercise. The infantry company went to the expense of a second prize, which consisted of a medal in honor of M. Turgot, and to thank him for having (at Voltaire's solicitation) freed the land of Gex [from unequal and burdensome imposts]. I had a third struck, like the first, except the initial of my name, which was added on the back below the inscription."

HIS LOVE OF LABOR.

"Labor was necessary to his life. Most of the time, we worked eighteen to twenty hours a day. He slept very little, and made me get up several times in the night. When he was composing a piece for the theatre, he was in a fever. His imagination tormented him, and left him no repose. He used to say then, 'I have the devil in me, as a man must have to write verses.' He committed no excesses of any kind, except in labor alone. He was very moderate in drinking and in eating. Formerly he made a great use of coffee; but in the last fifteen years of his life he took, at the most, only two or three cups a day, and with cream. With ladies, his amiability and politeness were unique and enchanting. When he was at work, we were often obliged to remind him that he had taken no nourishment. He had no fixed times for his meals, for going to bed, or for getting up. In general, he passed the greater part of his life in bed, at work. He was, speaking generally, of an extremely strong constitution, although almost every day he suffered the pains of indigestion, which often put him into bad humor. He then took some cassia, which he used two or three times a week, as well as *lavemens au savon*. When he had been angry with any of his servants, if he saw them near him some

hours after, he would say in their hearing, 'I was cross with my people a while ago; I scolded them. *Mon Dieu!* they must forgive me, for I suffer like a wretch.' Such excuses plainly show the goodness of his heart.

"He thought very little of physicians in general; he understood well his own constitution, and treated himself. I never saw him send to seek medical advice. When physicians came to see him, he spoke of medicine with them, and discoursed of it very well."

HIS DISPOSITION AND DEMEANOR.

"By nature he was extremely merry. He never permitted himself to ridicule any one to his face, nor to say disobliging things in conversation, unless he was forced to do so. He knew how to put himself in agreeable relations with everybody; in repartee he was prompt, delightful, and refined. His way of telling stories was very pleasant; he loved to argue with persons of intelligence and information. Often, however, he received coldly enough those who came to see him from mere curiosity, and had nothing to say. It is true, also, that he sometimes inspired those who came to see him for the first time with a kind of timidity and respectful fear, which they could not control.

"He did not value himself upon following the fashion in his clothes and in his mode of dressing himself, and thus he did not appear elegant to young people. But he had a singular love for cleanliness and neatness, and he was always himself scrupulously clean. He had a very fine sense of smell: He eyes were brilliant and filled with fire; he never made any use of spectacles; he often washed his eyes with pure, cool water. In the last years of his life he did not shave, but pulled out his beard with little pincers. He was somewhat tall of stature, but very thin. His countenance had nothing disagreeable in extreme old age, and he must have been very good-looking in his youth. He was always courageous, and this to an extraordinary degree even when very old.

"When he saw that persons questioned him from a real desire for instruction, he was obliging enough in reply. When my children, who were still very young, interrupted him with their questions when he was dictating something to me, and I wished to silence them, he would say to me, 'Let them talk; we should always reply with exact truth to children, and explain to them what they ask, considering their age, and not deceive them.' He had the goodness to do so with them.

"It is a strange thing, and one to which I can testify, that, despite the homage rendered him and the praise bestowed upon him, both by speech and writing, he did not at all believe in his glory. On the contrary, his modesty was extreme and sincere. Perhaps it was to this

conviction that the republic of letters owed a great part of the works that he composed. He always labored as if he had still to make his reputation. He has been reproached, and with some reason, for having often repeated himself in his various writings. When I called his attention to this, he would reply to me, 'I know it well; but there are cases in which it is necessary to redouble the strokes of the hammer. Certain truths cannot be repeated too often to men. Besides, the other work, in which I have said the same thing, may be unknown to some who will read this one.'"

We may presume that the secretary's memory deceived him a little when he recorded that his chief and himself labored eighteen or twenty hours a day. They may have done so sometimes, until Wagnière was reinforced by Antoine Bigex, a poor scholar whom Baron Grimm discovered at Paris, in the lowly place of floor-rubber. He was a native of a village in Savoy, near Lake Geneva, where he studied Latin, read Voltaire, and so spoiled himself for contented peasant life in an obscure hamlet. Grimm rescued him from his floor-rubbing, made him his secretary and man of confidence, and then lost him by giving him a holiday to go and visit his native place. On the way home, Bigex stopped at Ferney, as other travelers did, to pay his homage to Voltaire, who received and entertained him. "Having learned from his cook," says the baron, "that M. Bigex labored with me in the vineyard of the Lord, and wishing to relieve his secretary, he asked from me this good workman. It was like cutting off my right hand, but I consented with joy to the good fortune of M. Bigex, who has since labored under the immediate orders of his master, who is our master in all things."

Bigex served his chief in various ways. Besides being copyist, witness to signatures, messenger, and commissioner, he lent his name to several of his lord's minor pieces. Voltaire gravely attributes them to "M. Bigex," or "Bugex," or to "Simon Bigex;" and, in truth, M. Bigex was a man of scholarship and humor.

Another inmate was the famous Father Adam, a Jesuit priest, who did not leave France when his order was expelled by Madame de Pompadour, in 1764. He was chess-player to the lord of the château. Voltaire met him during his residence at Colmar in 1754, and when he bought the estate of

Ferney he found him again in a convent within a mile of the house. They often played chess together; Voltaire found him amusing; and, in 1763, the priest took up his abode in the château, where he remained thirteen years. In an establishment of thirty busy people he appears to have been the only idler, and he fell into the habit of relieving the monotony of his existence by quarreling with his companions. We read in Grimm of his accusing Bigex of stealing fruit by night from a garden, and of Bigex summoning him before a court of Gex on a charge of calumny. Voltaire admits that this Adam was "not the first man of the world," and Wagnière reports that, as old age drew on, he became so morose and quarrelsome that Voltaire, after two warnings, dismissed him from his house with a present of ten louis; the priest having property of his own worth nine hundred francs a year. For several years, however, he earned his maintenance by affording the master of Ferney a recreation of which he was very fond and a little ashamed.

Cousin D'Aumard is frequently mentioned in the correspondence as a member of the family at Ferney. Marguerite d'Aumard was the name of Voltaire's mother, of whom we know so little, and need to know so much. Cousin d'Aumard, a relation of that mother, a young officer of ordinary abilities and not the best habits, came to Les Délices in 1759, as poor young cousins will to the houses of rich old ones, and while there he was attacked with what seemed rheumatism. Voltaire sent him to the baths of Aix, with no good result. Dr. Tronchin ordered him thither a second time, but he returned to Les Délices no better. Worse symptoms appeared; surgery was necessary; but, after eighteen months of elaborate treatment by the most noted physician in Europe, the patient was worse than ever, and lay upon his bed helpless. In 1761 Voltaire wrote of him that "it required four persons to move him from one bed to another;" and he remained, paralyzed to the neck, unable to lift a finger or stir a foot during the rest of his life. He lived about ten years in this condition at Voltaire's house, and, so far as we can judge, he could not have been more carefully attended, nor his case more profoundly studied, if he had been a king's son. Among others whom Voltaire consulted was M. Bagieu, surgeon-gen-

eral of the royal foot-guards, who would necessarily know much of maladies of that kind. He described the case to this surgeon with a care and minuteness that left nothing obscure, and employed all that exquisite epistolary art of his to secure to his letter the most zealous attention. In many letters he moralizes upon the hapless condition of the young D'Aumard, stricken down in the flower of his youth, and lying helpless in his upper room, fed by a nurse like a child, hearing the distant gayety of the château, in which he was never again to take part.

Voltaire was a true Frenchman in his regard for kindred. We find him, in letters to his Paris notary, directing him to make certain payments to two of his nephews, the Abbé Mignot and M. d'Hornoy, "on account of the little sum [of eighteen hundred francs a year each] which they give me the pleasure of accepting from me." It is highly convenient to have such an uncle and cousin as he was in a numerous family. Witness this letter from him to a distant connection, called by courtesy, in the province where he lived, his "nephew," but who really was a relation of the late Denis, husband of his niece: —

[Ferney, October 22, 1770. To M. de la Houlière, commandant at Salses.] "My dear nephew after the fashion of Brittany, — for you are my nephew, and not my cousin, — learn, if you please, to assume the titles which belong to you.

"You lament, in your letter of September 20th, that you are not a brigadier in the armies of the king; and yet you are one. Fie! how wrong it is to cry famine while you are sitting upon a heap of corn! To prove to you that you are mistaken in saying that you are not a brigadier, read, if you please, a copy of what the Duke of Choiseul has had the goodness to write to me with his plump and beneficent hand, on the 14th of October:—

"'I did not know, my dear Voltaire, that M. de la Houlière was your nephew; but I know that he deserved to be, and to be a brigadier also, and that he has served us well, and that he employs himself in agriculture, which is another service to the state, at least as meritorious as that of destroying. Your letter makes me acquainted with the interest you take in M. de la Houlière, and I dare flatter myself that the king will not refuse me the favor of naming him brigadier the next time I wait upon him for the transaction of business,' etc., etc.

"M. Gayot [secretary of the minister], to whom also I took the precaution of writing, answers me, —

"'The good-will of the minister has left nothing for me to do in securing success. I shall have, at most, the trifling merit of accelerating, so far as may be in my power, the dispatch of the favor granted,' etc., etc.

"Sleep, then, upon either ear, my dear little nephew, and impart this little news to your brother. It is true, he did not send me word of the marriage of his daughter; but he is a farmer-general, which is a much greater dignity than that of brigadier, inasmuch as farmers-general have *brigadiers* in their service. Not long ago, Brigadier Court-Michon was announced at my house; he was a clerk in the custom-house.[1]

"Madame Denis, who is veritably your cousin, makes you the most tender compliments; I present my very humble obeisance to madame *la brigadière.*"

During Madame Denis's absence in Paris, the pensions which he paid to relations amounted to thirty-two thousand francs per annum. To friends, also, he was generous upon occasion, though never lavish. Upon learning that his staunch ally, Damilaville, had left his affairs in disorder and an old servant unprovided for, he sent a sum of money to the man. Thieriot always unable to live within a limited but sufficient income, was not forgotten in his old age. To relieve his embarrassment in 1769, Voltaire gave him the manuscript of his comedy "La Dépositaire," which he had had for some time in his portfolio. He informed Thieriot that it was "the work of a young man of great promise, who did not wish to be known;" and he authorized his old comrade, if the censors were over-rigorous, to change *piety* to *probity*, and *dévot* to *bigot*. "In my opinion," he added, "it will be a very pleasant thing to make a play succeed upon the stage which exhibits an estimable harlot [Ninon Lenclos] converting an imbecile devotee into a worthy man." The censors thought otherwise, and forbade the representation. The comedy was published in 1772, but it was never performed in public during the author's life-time.

It was often in his power, through his singular knowledge of business and his familiarity with influential persons, to render

[1] In the old army of France, brigadier was about equivalent to our lieutenant-colonel; but the word brigadier was also applied to a grade of civil servants of the crown.

great services to others with small cost of money to himself. But in these cases he often expended a great deal of labor and nice calculation. During the scarcity of grain in 1771, he enabled his poor neighbors of Gex to buy their wheat at a moderate price by importing a quantity from Sicily, where he had often before bought grain in the way of commerce. He sent for two hundred sacks, as Wagnière records, which he sold in small portions at something less than cost. He had been for forty years a speculator in provisions, and knew where to look for the commodity wanted. Indeed, he was still amusing himself in commerce, and continued to do so as long as he lived. In 1773, he wrote to the Countess d'Argental, "We have — some Genevans and myself — sent a ship to Bengal. For my part, I shall still laugh if the fifty-nine persons who are in our ship eat up all our investment, and make fools of us, as seems but too probable." Again, in 1775, to the Count d'Argental, "I must tell you that I have sent a ship to India, with some associates. The lightning struck our vessel, and knocked it all to pieces. I have, thank God, a lightning-rod [*anti-tonnerre*] in my garden. It would be too much to have an affair with the thunder upon the Indian seas and in my flower-garden at the same time. The devotees would make too much fun of me."

It is interesting, also, to observe the mingling of gayety in his dunning letters, which were numerous and urgent. He writes to his Colmar friend, Advocate Dupont, of the excuses of one of his debtors: "He tells me I am the son of Apollo and of Plutus; but if he sends me no money, Plutus will disinherit me, and Apollo will not console me. He says he has spent his money digging in the mines; but he greatly elongates my *mines*.[1] It is not in our contract that he should seek for gold, but that he should send me some; and the true way of not having any to give me is to imagine that there is some in the Vosges mountains. The true mines are his vines well cultivated. . . . . Father Adam always wins at chess; he sends you his compliments."

Madame Denis would have found Ferney a cheerful abode if she had had the mind to enjoy it. President de Brosse, whose land supplied wood to the château, remarked that fifteen fires were kept burning in it in cold weather. Her uncle was one

[1] Countenance.

of those to whom nothing whatever is void of interest. He pleased himself in planning gardens that were unlike all others in the world, with vines hanging in festoons as far as the eye could see; nothing regular, and all enchanting. "I love my oxen," he writes; "I caress them; they give me gracious looks. I have had a pair of wooden shoes made for myself." Yes; and in 1771 a wonderful stone was found in the bladder of one of his oxen, such as our Indians occasionally find in buffaloes, and carry about with them as "big medicine." He sent it to a veterinary surgeon in Lyons for explanation, with one of his merry letters. The scarcity of grain in 1771 set him upon experimenting in food, and he assured his tenants that a bread made of half flour and half potato was more nourishing and more savory than bread of flour alone.

All things, all persons, all subjects, near and remote, could interest him; so that in scarcely any endurable circumstances could life have been tedious to him. "We have in Geneva," he wrote once, "a woman one hundred and two years old, who has three deaf-and-dumb children. They converse with their mother from morning till night, now by moving their lips, now by moving their fingers; they play very well all games, know the gossip of the city, and laugh at the follies of their neighbors as well as the greatest chatterers can. They understand all that is said from the motion of the lips. In a word, they are very good company." It was to this lady, Madame Lullin, that he sent a bouquet and a stanza upon her hundredth birthday: —

"Nos grandpères vous virent belle;
Par votre esprit vous plaisez à cent ans.
Vous méritiez d'épouser Fontenelle,
Et d'être sa veuve longtemps." [1]

[1] Our grandfathers saw you beautiful; by your *esprit* you please at a hundred years. You deserved to marry Fontenelle, and to be his widow a long time.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

HIS PRODIGIOUS REPUTATION.

DURING these later years he was sustaining the splendid burden of a reputation such as no man of letters had ever borne, or is likely ever to bear again. A reputation savors of the public that bestows it, as well as of the individual who possesses it. What a public that must have been which drew from Shakespeare his wondrous succession of dramas, and gave him in return the due reward of honor and fortune! The timid souls in England, the dull and the gloomy, had mostly gone into Puritanism, leaving for Shakespeare the courageous and genial spirits, who knew how to be virtuous without quarreling with their cakes and ale. Shakespeare loved his pit, and occasionally gave it a friendly glance over the foot-lights, exchanging jokes with it, as in the grave-diggers' scene of "Hamlet." Voltaire spoke to a Europe at once susceptible and ignorant; not destitute of literary culture, but accustomed for many ages to think only in ways prescribed. His rapid reviews of history, his limpid biographical narratives, his careful summaries of science, were read by people to whom free and broad treatment of modern subjects was a novelty; and his productions of that nature were so much glory added to the lustre of the finest literary gift possessed by a Frenchman of that century.

A fame purely literary lies in a very narrow compass; it is probable that one half the inhabitants of the British islands knew nothing of Shakespeare, not even his name; and, among ourselves, try Irving, Cooper, Longfellow, Whittier, Holmes, Lowell, Howells, upon the average man of town or country, and see how many recognize these honored names. But Voltaire had mingled in affairs other than literary: he had defended Calas, Sirven, and Covelle; he had been arrested at Frankfort; he had been associated in various ways with kings

and Popes; he had had the insolence to found a city. Moreover, his reputation was sixty years old, and during that long period he had every year done things to widen, increase, or intensify it. The result was that he had to suffer and enjoy in his old age a reputation that was immense and unique. We may say that, during the last fifteen years of his life, there were two Popes in Europe: one at Rome, the Pope of its ignorance; the other at Ferney, the Pope of its intelligence, — both incomplete. Ferney represented all in human achievement that adorns, cheers, exalts, amuses the life of intelligent leisure; while there was nothing to be said for the Roman Pope except that he was indispensable to the heavy-laden majority, who had nothing very cheering in their lives or deaths but what he provided. He gave them every Sunday morning the sublimest drama ever presented, set to the best music ever composed, and on every Sunday afternoon a holiday free from the baleful shadow of sabbatarian gloom. When philosophers do as much for the toiling sons of men, they, too, in their turn, may rule the world; for the basis of empire is ever the same, — the love and confidence of the common people.

Those who attribute our loss of leisure to cheap postage may be interested to know that the lord of Ferney rose in revolt against the postman eighty years before cheap postage had made that functionary the tyrant he now is. So many authors sent him manuscripts to correct, to admire, and to introduce, so many readers wrote to express admiration, dissent, or warning, that, sometimes, as he tells us, his postage for one day amounted to a hundred francs. "The number of fools, my *confrères*," he wrote to the Abbé d'Olivet, in 1761, "whom the rage of writing possesses, is immense; and that of the other fools, who write anonymous letters, is not less considerable." Soon after settling at Ferney he caused to be inserted in the "Mercure" of Paris a notice to this effect: "Several persons having complained of not receiving acknowledgment of packets sent to Ferney, to Tourney, or to Les Délices, notice is given that, on account of the immense number of those packets, it has become necessary to decline receiving all that do not come from persons with whom the proprietor has the honor to be acquainted."

He had also his ample share of eccentric correspondence.

In 1770 a letter was found in the post-office at Paris, addressed thus : —

" To the Prince of Poets, Perpetual Phenomenon of Glory, Philosopher of the Nations, Mercury of Europe, Orator of his Native Land, Promoter of Citizens, Historian of Kings, Panegyrist of Heroes, Critic of the Critics, Arbiter of Taste, Painter in all the Styles, the Same at every Age, Protector of the Arts, Benefactor of Talents as well as of True Merit, Admirer of Genius, Scourge of Persecutors, Enemy of Fanatics, Defender of the Oppressed, Father of Orphans, Model for the Rich, Support of the Indigent, Example of the Sublime Virtues."

Judicious post-office clerks, trained to decipher and interpret superscriptions, could not be at a loss to know where to send this epistle. It reached Ferney in due time, where Wagnière took it from the carrier's hands, and conveyed it to his master. " He would not receive it," reports the secretary, " saying it was from some simpleton [*fou*], and sent it back to the post-office." Meanwhile, it was published in the papers ; upon which the acute Fréron inferred that the superscription was Voltaire's own work, since it must have been written either by him or by a madman. The letter, however, was traced to the Abbé de Launay, an inmate of the debtors' prison in Paris, who was accustomed to write in some such way to any one whom he thought likely to send him money. The direction of this letter was scarcely a burlesque of the estimation in which Voltaire was really held by large numbers of people.

He wrote continually, too, upon the subject which can never cease to be the one most interesting to reflecting minds ; and hence he received, as he says, " every eight days," a letter from an inquiring soul, wishing him to send the true interpretation of the universe by return of post. He said to Madame du Deffand, "A burgomaster of Middelbourg [Holland], whom I do not know, wrote me some time since to ask me, as a friend, if there is a God, and, in case there is one, if he cares for us ; if matter is eternal ; if it can think ; if the soul is immortal. And he begged me to reply to him as soon as I had received his letter."

At that time the influence of a crowned head in giving cur-

rency and fashion to an author was very great, — so great that one of Voltaire's most remarkable triumphs was that he should have won "good company" to his side against the sovereigns of his own country. But, in truth, there were two courts then in France: one presided over by the king and queen, the other by the king and mistress; and Voltaire managed to stand well with the court whose approval gave prestige and fashion. His relations with other sovereigns all tended to give currency to his works and weight to his name. The preference of Catherine II. was, as we have seen, decided and manifest. It was not merely that her letters to him teemed with eulogy; she trumpeted him on all occasions; his bust adorned her boudoir; his works were always upon her familiar shelves, and often in her hands. More than this, she gave him the signal homage of publicly acting upon his advice.

"I suppose [she wrote to him in December, 1768] that you believe me a little inconsistent. I besought you, about a year ago, to send me everything which has ever been written by the author whose works I love best to read. I received, in the month of May last, the parcel which I desired, accompanied by the bust of the most illustrious man of our age. I felt an equal satisfaction with both; for six months they have been the most beautiful ornament of my rooms, and my daily study; but, hitherto, I have not acknowledged their arrival, nor given you my thanks. This is how I reasoned: A morsel of paper covered with bad writing, filled with bad French, is a poor way of thanking such a man; it is necessary rather to pay my duty to him by some act which could please him. Different things have presented themselves, the detail of which would be too long. At last, I thought that the best thing I could do would be to give an example in my own person which could be useful to men. I remembered that, by good fortune, I had not had the small-pox. I wrote to England for an inoculator; and the famous Dr. Dimsdale resolved to come to Russia. He inoculated me on the 12th of October, 1768. I have not been in bed a single moment, and I have received company every day. I am going immediately to have my only son [Paul] inoculated. . . . . Besides that, inoculation is going on at present at Petersburg in three schools, and in a hospital established under the eye of M. Dimsdale. . . . . I forgot to say to you that I have increased the little medicine taken during inoculation by three or four excellent specifics, which I recommend to every man of good sense not to neglect on such an occasion. It is to have read to him 'L'Ecossaise,' 'Candide,' 'L'Ingénu,'

'L'Homme aux Quarante Ecus,' and 'La Princesse de Babylone.' There is no chance after that of feeling the least inconvenience. . . . . I take my pen in hand once more to pray you to avail yourself of this fur cloak against the cutting wind and cold of the Alps, which, they say, inconvenience you sometimes."

When an empress writes so to her favorite author, we can imagine what the court does, and the fashionable world. She sent him also a snuff-box, turned on a lathe by her own "lovely and august hands," and adorned by her portrait. The fur pelisse and the snuff-box he acknowledged in verses of eulogy, in the manner of the age, and he seized the occasion of a new edition of his works to dedicate to her the volume upon Universal History, which serves as the introduction to the "Essai sur les Mœurs." Casanova, who was in Russia when this volume arrived, says that an edition of three thousand copies, printed in Petersburg, was exhausted in eight days, and that every Russian who could pretend to read French carried a copy about with him in his pocket. Voltaire, he adds, was for a time the only topic, the only author, and the prevailing oath. The dedication, which is now shrunk to five lines in small type, was then spread over a whole page of great capitals: —

"To the very high and August Princess,
CATHERINE II.,
Empress of all the Russias,
Protectress of the Arts and Sciences,
Worthy by her Understanding
To judge ancient Nations,
As she is worthy to govern her own.
Offered very humbly
By the Nephew of the Author."

This was highly gratifying to the loyal Russians; and no volume, perhaps, could be better adapted to *begin* the education of a people such as the Russians then were. The empress sent to London for an inoculator; but this volume inoculated the Russian mind, and it has been happily working in that mind ever since, making it less and less satisfied with barbaric rule.

In Prussia, and in all the northern states of Germany, the favor of Frederic gave to Voltaire a wider currency than Cath-

erine could give him in Russia. Frederic's love of Voltaire's works increased with his years; he never expressed it more warmly than in his later letters. The king wrote to him in 1770: —

"As long as the sun shall light the world, as long as the world shall preserve a tincture of science, a spark of taste, as long as there shall be spirits who love sublime thoughts, as long as there shall be ears sensible to harmony, your works will last, and your name will fill the space of the ages which lead to eternity. As for my works, people will say, 'It is much that this king was not entirely imbecile; this or that passage is passable; if he had been born a private citizen, he might have gained his subsistence as proof-reader to a publisher,' — and then the book will be thrown down; then candle-lighters will be made of it; then it will never be spoken of again."

When the king thinks so, and that king is a Frederic II., the court and public of his day usually have the honor of agreeing with his majesty. And not alone the court and public. When the king wrote these words, in January, 1770, the most richly endowed young man of whom we have knowledge, the magnificent Goethe, was twenty years old; and we see, from many passages of his writings, that he even went beyond the King of Prussia in his estimate of Voltaire. In Louis XIV., Goethe once wrote, nature produced the consummate specimen of the monarchical type of man, and, in so doing, exhausted herself and broke the mould. Not that he was the best of kings, nor even a good king; but he was the king who was most a king.

"So [he adds], in Voltaire, nature produced the man most eminently endowed with all the qualities which characterize and honor his nation, and charged him to represent France to the universe. After having produced these two extraordinary men, types, one of the royal majesty, the other of the French genius, nature rested, as if to make them better appreciated, or as if exhausted by the creation of two prodigies.

"A man must possess many advantages in order that public opinion may recognize in him an incontestable superiority; it is especially in France that a public, disdainful and difficult to please, soon ceases to regard whatever is not truly extraordinary. For a man to conquer

its lasting approval, it is not too much for him to have a multitude of talents, a wide and universal comprehension, a union of qualities the most opposed to one another, and which seem the most incompatible. Nothing short of a marvel wins the admiration of a Frenchman. But nature created marvels for him, in order to condemn him to admiration. I know not if we Germans are more sensitive to literary beauties than the French, but we are certainly less avaricious of our applause; it suffices that talent gives us some pleasure to be the object of our homage; but even that which he admires the Frenchman does not love, while among us whatever is admired is loved also.

"Depth, genius, imagination, taste, reason, sensibility, philosophy, elevation, originality, nature, intellect, fancy, rectitude, facility, flexibility, precision, art, abundance, variety, fertility, warmth, magic, charm, grace, force, an eagle's sweep of vision, vast understanding, rich instruction, excellent tone, urbanity, vivacity, delicacy, correctness, purity, cleanness, elegance, harmony, brilliancy, rapidity, gayety, pathos, sublimity, universality, perfection, indeed, — behold Voltaire!

"Voltaire will be always regarded as the greatest man in literature of modern times, and, perhaps, even of all times; as the most astonishing creation of the Author of nature, a creation in which he pleased himself to assemble, once, in the frail and perishable organization of a man, all the varieties of talent, all the glories of genius, all the powers of thought."[1]

This is the faithful expression of Goethe's feeling during what may be termed his French period, when, as he said to Eckermann, half a century later, Voltaire reigned over the world of literature and opinion, and when it cost him an arduous struggle to preserve his German independence against an influence so dominant. But we see in Goethe's later writings and conversations that, to the last, the talents of Voltaire seemed to him phenomenal. His conversation with Eckermann, in 1828, upon the short personal poems of Voltaire, may serve to show this: —

"'You are right,' said Goethe to his affectionate secretary, 'to give so much time to those little poems addressed to persons; they are unquestionably among the most charming of his works. There is not a line which is not full of thought, clear, bright, and graceful.'

"'And we see,' said I, 'his relations to all the great and mighty of the world, and remark with pleasure the distinguished position taken by himself, inasmuch as he seems to feel himself equal to the highest;

[1] 2 Œuvres de Voltaire, 458; 97–volume ed.

and we never find that any majesty can embarrass his free mind, even for a moment.'

"'Yes,' said Goethe 'he bore himself like a man of rank. And, with all his freedom and audacity, he ever kept himself within the limits of strict propriety, which is, perhaps, saying still more. I may cite the Empress of Austria as an authority in such matters; she has repeatedly assured me that, in those poems of Voltaire's, there is no trace of crossing the line of *convenance*.'

"'Does your excellency,' said I, 'remember the short poem in which he makes to the Princess of Prussia, afterwards Queen of Sweden, a pretty declaration of love, by saying that he dreamed of being elevated to the royal dignity?'

"'It is one of his best,' said Goethe, and he recited the lines. 'How pretty that is! And never did poet have his talent so completely at command every moment as Voltaire. I remember an anecdote, when he had been for some time on a visit to Madame du Châtelet. Just as he was going away, and the carriage was standing at the door, he received a letter from a great number of young girls in a neighboring convent, who wished to play the "Death of Julius Cæsar" on the birthday of their abbess, and begged him to write them a prologue. The case was too delicate for a refusal; so Voltaire at once called for pen and paper, and wrote the desired prologue, standing, upon the mantel-piece. It is a poem of perhaps twenty lines, thoroughly digested, finished, perfectly suited to the occasion, and, in short, of the very best class.'

"'I am very desirous to read it,' said I.

"'I doubt,' said Goethe, 'whether you will find it in your collection. It has only lately come to light; and, indeed, he wrote hundreds of such poems, of which many may still be scattered about among private persons.'

"'I found, of late, a passage in Lord Byron,' said I, 'from which I perceived with delight that even Byron had an extraordinary esteem for Voltaire. We may see in his works how much he liked to read, study, and make use of Voltaire.'

"'Byron,' said Goethe, 'knew too well where anything was to be got, and was too clever not to draw from this universal source of light.'"[1]

The anecdote related by Goethe of the young ladies applying for a prologue to the "Mort de Cêsar" is given by Duvernet also, who mentions other particulars. Voltaire, he says, received their letter at a moment of "extreme embarrassment."

[1] Conversations. December, 1828.

They assured him that they would all willingly be "pulverized for his glory." "*Mordieu!*" cried the irritated poet, tearing their letter to pieces; "a fine thing indeed for a parcel of girls to want to present a conspiracy of proud republicans! The sack of their convent would suit them much better." Relieved by this explosion, he regained his good humor, and added, "They are good girls, though. They are not very sensible to wish a prologue for that tragedy; but I am still less so to lose my temper for a prologue." So saying, he wrote the lines, which, since Goethe's day, have been published in his works.

The young ladies of the convent of Beaumes, it must be owned, were highly favored; he caught the tone and feeling of such compositions as completely as if he had been an old master of a Jesuit college.

But to return. If Frederic II. and Goethe had this feeling for Voltaire, we need say nothing of his influence over the German people of that generation. The reading class of Germany, as we know, were absolutely his, while their own great literature was still unforeseen; Frederic despising his native tongue; Goethe a young man; Schiller a boy; Kant unknown. One of the products of the royal porcelain works at Berlin in 1775 was a bust of Voltaire in that material. "People tear one another," wrote the king, "in the struggle for your busts at the manufactory of porcelain, where they do not turn them out fast enough to supply the demand." Frederic had already sent to Ferney a case of porcelain ware from this establishment, and the poet drank his coffee from a cup which, he declared, could not be matched either at Dresden or at Sèvres. He feigned to object to a wreath of laurel around the cover of "the prettiest bowl in the world," on the ground that it savored of ostentation in a king to place his *arms* upon the cover of a bowl.

From England, too, came to Ferney many proofs of regard and consideration, such as surprise readers not familiar with that century. The greatest of these was a translation of his collected works into English by Smollett, Franklin, and others, begun in 1762, and published in monthly five-shilling volumes, until thirty-seven volumes had appeared. Costly and laborious as this enterprise was, it seems to have been profitable,

as we still find in our older libraries copies of the second edition; where, also, we may count from forty to sixty separate publications bearing his name, and published during his life. Coleman, Garrick, Chesterfield, Baskerville, Horace Walpole, Hume, and Robertson were among his correspondents. Robertson sent him, in 1770, through Madame du Deffand, a copy of his "History of Charles V.," which Voltaire acknowledged with his usual cordiality. "His respect, his veneration for you," wrote Madame du Deffand, "are extreme." Voltaire wrote to the historian: "It belongs to you and to M. Hume to write history. You are eloquent, learned, and impartial; I join myself to Europe in esteeming you." About the same time came to him from England a copy of the medal struck in honor of circumnavigation of the earth by Admiral Anson. "The family," he wrote, "have sent me one in gold. They paid me that honor in my character of citizen of the globe which the admiral has just made the tour of."

He still liked to use his English a little. John Baskerville, the publisher and type-founder, wrote to him in 1771 for the last edition of one of his works, perhaps with a view to printing it in his superb manner. He replied in English: "I thank you erneastly for the honour you do me. I send you an exemplary by the way of Holland. I am your most obedient servant, VOLTAIRE, Gentleman of the M. C. King's Chamber." Baskerville, in return, sent him copies of his fine editions of Milton and Virgil, which he also acknowledged in English: "The old scribbler, to whom you have been so kind as to send your magnificent editions of Virgil and Milton, thanks you heartily. He will send you, as soon as possible, his poor sheets duly corrected. They stand in great need of it."

In the colonies of America, and, particularly, in Virginia and Massachusetts, Voltaire was a familiar name from an early period. The great houses of Virginia were abundantly supplied with the works, not of Voltaire only, but of all the Encyclopædists; and John Adams intimates that one half of the educated men of the world in New England agreed with them in opinion, when he was a young lawyer. There is an amusing entry in his Diary, dated *Sunday*, May 30, 1756, when he was a village school-master, a few miles from Boston. He records that he went to church that day, as usual, and

heard the minister say that sinners were in continual danger of being swept by the mighty torrent of "God's wrath" to endless perdition. But he records also, "Read part of the first volume of Voltaire's 'Age of Louis XIV.'" The young gentleman allowed himself much latitude in his Sunday readings, for he speaks of reading on Sundays Ovid's "Art of Love" to Mrs. Savil, the wife of the village doctor.

In France, Voltaire reigned without a competitor; not in the polite world merely, but over the intelligence and patriotism of the nation. A hundred proofs could be given of his peculiar and intense popularity, as well as of the extent of his influence. Few compliments that he received in his life pleased him so much as the naming of a fine ship The Voltaire, by some merchants of Nantes; an honor which he acknowledged by a poem of seventy lines, "To My Ship," of singular grace and spirit, in his best Horatian manner. He tells his ship, among other things, where not to go: not to Naples, where the people make more of the blood of St. Januarius than of the ashes of Virgil; not to the Tiber, where there are no longer talents, heroes, great men, — "no longer a Rome, but only a Pope." His letter, also, to the chief owner of the vessel was highly amusing. Never before, he said, had a mere maker of verse and prose received such an honor; all such having been reserved hitherto for Neptune, the Tritons, the Sirens, ministers of state, or saints, "which last have always arrived at a good harbor." In the war of 1741, he added, the English captured a Spanish ship laden with papal bulls, crucifixes, and indulgences. "I flatter myself that your ship will not carry such merchandise; which procures, indeed, a very great fortune in the next world, but other sorts of cargo are necessary for this."

Piron was still alive, though approaching his eightieth year He launched a couplet on this occasion, which many diarists copied: —

"Si j'avais un vaisseau qui se nommât Voltaire,
Sous cet auspice heureux j'en ferais un corsaire." [1]

The society of Paris was attentive to what passed at Ferney, as also to what came from that retreat. It was a wonderfully

[1] If I had a ship which was named Voltaire, under that happy omen I should make it a corsair.

light, bright, gay society, the recollection of which used to make Talleyrand say, in his old age, that one who had not lived in it could not know how delicious it was possible for human existence to be. What pretty ideas they had of entertaining one another, so superior to the crude, four-bottle debauchery that prevailed on the other side of the channel! Madame de Genlis, not yet a pattern governess, mentions one:

"M. d'Albaret had been several times at Ferney, and imitated M. de Voltaire to perfection. It was agreed that we should play 'The Suppers of Madame du Bocage,' and that we should suppose M. de Voltaire to be at Paris. M. d'Albaret played Voltaire, M. de Genlis the Chevalier de Barbantane, and four or five others represented other wits. I wore the costume of a woman sixty years of age, and, after the lessons of M. d'Albaret, I played with great success Madame du Bocage; speaking of my journey to Italy, while they spoke to me of my 'Columbiade' and of my former beauty. Afterwards, the attention of every one was directed to M. de Voltaire, who was exhibited in the most delightful way possible, and without any exaggeration. He told stories and recited verses, among which were many impromptus made in my praise; that is, in praise of Madame du Bocage. We had in this way five 'Suppers of Madame du Bocage,' without ever getting tired of that pleasantry. M. d'Albaret was an inimitable Voltaire. We engaged to keep the secret, and it was kept so faithfully that our play was never spoken of in society."[1]

Such airy lightness easily becomes frivolity, and "all Paris," as it seems, could readily enter into a passing jest. Charles André, a Paris wig-maker, flattered by some of his customers that he had a genius for poetry, wrote a tragedy, entitled "The Lisbon Earthquake," a mass of absurdities, which he offered to the company of the Théâtre-Français. The actors amused themselves by affecting to listen attentively to the reading, and declared that they were prevented from accepting the play only by the great expense and danger attending the production of an earthquake. The barber printed his tragedy, and dedicated it to "the illustrious and celebrated poet, M. de Voltaire," whom he called his dear *confrère*. He sold the piece in his own shop, and there arose such a rage to possess it that fifty carriages a day stopped before his door, filled with fashionable people who desired copies. The author sent his

[1] Memoirs of Madame de Genlis, volume i. page 296. Paris, 1825.

piece to Voltaire, who addressed him a letter of four pages, containing four words a hundred times repeated: —

"Monsieur André, make wigs; Monsieur André, make wigs; Monsieur André, make wigs; wigs, always wigs, and never anything but wigs."

There is an anecdote of one of his lake rides between Lausanne and Ferney, which shows the passion of sentiment which his name could sometimes excite during his later years. He alighted at the inn of the little village of Colonges, near Lausanne, one day, about 1771; where, also, a pedestrian artist stopped for dinner. The painter had neither brush nor palette with him, but, inspired by the sight of the great man, drew with charcoal upon the front of the fire-place a full-length portrait of him, which proved to be a striking likeness. Some time after, a party of young roysterers, not knowing who this odd figure was, with its large peruke and fur cap, were about to make it still more grotesque by some additions. "Already," as the story goes, "they had laid hands upon that venerable head, when the landlady saw them, and cried out, '*It is Voltaire!*' Struck with a religious respect, they refrained, and one of them took post, flew to Geneva, and brought back a glazier, who put the portrait in safety against such an insult." Four lines were afterwards written under it: —

"Mon œil le reconnait, c'est lui-même, c'est lui
Qui de la vérité fut le plus ferme appui!
O toi, qui dans ces lieux viens mettre pied à terre,
Trop heureux, ne pars pas sans contempler Voltaire!"[1]

This charcoal portrait was seen in the inn of Colonges in 1777 by the editor of the Wagnière and Longchamp Memoirs, who gives the anecdote.[2]

It was, however, in the circle of "the brethren" at Paris, the Encyclopædists, the authors who had been kindled, formed, and defended by Voltaire, that he was most tenderly cherished. This was, indeed, but a just return for the amazing devotion and faultless tact with which, on all occasions, he took their part. He made common cause with them at all times and in all ways. If Diderot or Marmontel were candidates for the

[1] My eye recognizes him; it is himself; it is he who was truth's firmest support! O thou, who in this place puts foot to earth, too fortunate, go not away without looking upon Voltaire!

[2] Volume ii, page 42.

Academy, he exerted himself on their behalf with the whole force of his talents, but, particularly, with his greatest talent, that of persistence. For months, when Diderot was a candidate, the burden of his letters to Paris was, Let him enter; let him enter. "Compel them to come in." "Take the kingdom of heaven by violence." "If it is impossible, it must still be attempted." And when the Sorbonne published their *indiculus*, or little index, containing thirty-seven errors found in Marmontel's "Belisaire," he seemed to frustrate and annul the proceeding by simply appending the word *ridiculous*.

With what generous warmth he applauded their exertions in the sacred cause of crushing *l'Infâme!* The Abbé Morellet, during his stay in Rome, obtained access, by chance, to an immense folio volume of the fourteenth century, in manuscript, containing the whole procedure of the Inquisition, drawn up by the head of the institution for the guidance of the Inquisitors of every country in Christendom. Struck with horror at its hideous revelations, he copied many passages, summarized others, and drew up his "Manual of the Inquisition," in French; giving the procedure, in order, from the first information to the final execution of the victims at the stake. Never was anything published more profoundly horrible. "One lady of my acquaintance," the abbé reports, "could read it only half through, and had to relieve her mind by holding the book on the live coals with the tongs, as if she had been grilling an Inquisitor." Voltaire gave the young abbé the heartiest applause. "Have I read the lovely jurisprudence of the Inquisition? Ah, yes, *mort-dieu!* I have read it, and it made upon me the impression which the body of Cæsar made upon the Romans."

The most notable thing said of this Manual was the remark of M. de Malesherbes, the minister who permitted its publication. "You believe, perhaps," said he to Morellet, in handing him back his manuscript, "that you have gathered here extraordinary facts, procedures unheard of. *Eh bien*, know that this system of jurisprudence of Nicolas Eymeric [Grand Inquisitor], and of his Inquisition, is substantially *our* jurisprudence." The young abbé was astonished and incredulous; but he found it so, and so it remained until the Revolution.

"Every time [wrote Voltaire to Saurin] one of the brethren grat-

ifies the public with some good work which is applauded, I throw myself on my knees in my little oratory. I thank God, and I cry out, O God of good spirits, God of just spirits, God of amiable spirits, extend thy mercy to all our brethren! Continue to confound the fools, the hypocrites, and the fanatics! The more good works our brothers produce, the more the glory of thy holy name will be spread abroad. Give success always to the wise, and cause the impertinent to be hissed. May I see, before I die, thy faithful servant Helvetius and thy faithful servant Saurin in the number of the Forty. Such are the most ardent vows of the monk Voltairius, who from the bottom of his cell joins himself to the communion of the brethren, salutes them, and blesses them in the spirit of an indissoluble concord. He flatters himself, above all, that the venerable brother Helvetius will gather together as much as he can the dispersed faithful; will save them from the venom of the basilisk, and from the biting of the scorpion, and from the teeth of the Frérons and the Palissots. He recommends, also, to the combatants of the Lord the fanatic persecutors, whom it is necessary to devote to public execration."

And, again, in 1764, to a young nobleman, more zealous than prudent: —

"I conjure you not to dispute with hot-headed people: contradiction irritates them always, instead of enlightening them; they fly into a passion; they hate those whose opinions are cited. Controversy never convinced any man; men can be influenced by making them think for themselves, by seeming to doubt with them, by leading them as if by the hand, without their perceiving it. A good book lent to them, which they read at leisure, produces upon them surer effects, because they do not then blush to be subjugated by the superior reason of an antagonist. . . . . We are in this world only to do good in it."

In a similar strain to his favorite disciple, Damilaville: —

"I confess to you, my dear brother, that I sacrifice every small resentment, all private interest, to this great interest of truth. It is necessary to overwhelm a hydra which has launched its venom upon so many men respectable by their manners and by their knowledge. Your friends, and, above all, your principal friend [Diderot], ought to regard this enterprise as their first duty; not for the sake of avenging past wounds, but to secure themselves against future wounds, to put all honest men in safety, and, in one word, to render service to the human race."

Thus rousing, inciting, applauding the little band of the

faithful, inviting them oft, entertaining them long, defending them always, he grew into their affections, and, in 1770, they conceived the project of giving him a signal mark of their regard. They were accustomed then to meet every Friday evening at the house of the Swiss banker, Jacques Necker, who had married in 1764 a learned Swiss governess, daughter of a Protestant pastor. Already, in 1770, their gifted child, to be known by and by as Madame de Staël, was four years of age, and beginning to listen to the conversation of her mother's distinguished circle. At Madame Necker's, one evening in 1770, the scheme was started of a statue of Voltaire, to be executed by a great artist, to be paid for by subscription, and to be set up in some public place. The project was accepted with enthusiasm by the whole of the company of seventeen persons, and Madame Necker undertook the task of proposing it to Voltaire. Pigalle, the most famous sculptor of the day, was at once thought of to do the work. The subscriptions were to be not less in amount than two louis d'or, nor more than twenty; and, in fact, when the Duke of Richelieu sent fifty louis, he was besought not to shame by such munificence the modest contributions which alone could be offered by men of letters, and he consented to give but twenty. Voltaire replied to Madame Necker in his own manner, May 11, 1770: —

"My just modesty, madame, and my reason made me think, at first, that the idea of a statue was a good jest; but, since the thing is serious, suffer me to speak to you seriously.

"I am seventy-six years old, and I have scarcely recovered from a severe malady which treated my body and my soul very badly for six weeks. M. Pigalle, it is said, is to come and model my countenance. But, madame, it would be necessary that I should have a countenance, and the place where it was can hardly be divined. My eyes are sunk three inches; my cheeks are of old parchment, badly stuck upon bones that hold to nothing; the few teeth I had are gone. What I say to you is not coquetry; it is the pure truth. A poor man has never been sculptured in that condition; M. Pigalle would believe that he was played with; and, for my part, I have so much self-love that I should never dare to appear in his presence. I would advise him, if he wishes to put an end to this strange affair, to take his model, with slight alterations, from the little figure in Sèvres porcelain. After all, what does it matter to posterity whether a block of marble resem-

bles this man or another? I keep myself very philosophical upon this matter. But as I am still more grateful than philosophical, I give you the same power over what remains of my body as you have over what remains of my soul. Both are very much out of order; but my heart is yours, madame, as if I were but twenty-five, and the whole with very sincere respect. My obeisance, I pray you, to M. Necker."

Upon reflection, he was more reconciled to the scheme, and ended by entering into it warmly, regarding it, as he wrote to D'Alembert a month later, "as a sound box on the ear which you are giving to fanaticism and to the base minions of that monster," and as "a testimonial of friendship to your old reprobate [*enfant perdu*], to the foe of tyrants, Pompignans, and Frérons." He added, "Under this marble you crush superstition, which was again lifting its head."

The subscriptions flowed in, until they amounted to nearly nineteen thousand francs; for it was found impossible to exclude many powerful friends of Voltaire who had not written a book. All his monarchs except the Pope appear to have subscribed, and Frederick of Prussia accompanied his subscription with a burst of eulogium, as if desirous to make amends at last to his prisoner of Frankfort, in the face of Europe. It was D'Alembert who called his attention to the scheme. "The finest monument to Voltaire," replied the king, "is the one he has erected to himself, — his works, — which will endure longer than the Basilisk of St. Peter, the Louvre, and all the buildings which human vanity has dedicated to eternity. When French shall no longer be spoken, Voltaire will be translated into the language that shall succeed the French. . . . . You have only to inform me of what is required of me." D'Alembert replied, "A crown-piece, sire, and your name." He told the king, also, that he had read his noble eulogium to the French Academy, who were so much pleased with it that they had ordered it to be inscribed at length upon their records. In acknowledgment, Voltaire congratulated the king, cultivator of all the other arts and sciences, that now he was willing to encourage anatomy also, by subscribing for a skeleton.

Rousseau, Fréron, Palissot, and La Beaumelle contributed, but the circle at Madame Necker's returned the money of all of them but Rousseau, and found it difficult to persuade Vol-

taire not to return his, also. Rousseau's letter, inclosing his two louis d'or, was thought very happy in its omissions; it was addressed to the secretary of the Academy of Sciences: "I learn, sir, that a plan has been formed to erect a statue to M. de Voltaire, and that all who are known to the world by some printed work are permitted to be subscribers to it. I have paid dearly enough for this honor to be in full right to claim it, and I request the favor of you to exert your good offices to get my name enrolled among the list of subscribers." It required all D'Alembert's influence with his chief to overcome his aversion to the acceptance of this offering.

In a month, M. Pigalle was at Ferney, engaged in the work assigned him. He found it one of the most difficult of tasks to model so anatomical a subject with hands accustomed to the rounded outlines of Venus and the Graces. Baron Grimm, who heard the artist's adventures at Ferney related by himself, gives a ludicrous account of the same: —

"Phidias-Pigalle has made his journey to Ferney, and returned, after having passed eight days there. The evening before his departure he had yet done nothing, and had made up his mind to renounce the enterprise, and to come back and declare that he could not do it. The patriarch accorded him a sitting every day; but during the sitting he was like a child, unable to keep still a moment. Most of the time he had his secretary beside him, to whom he dictated letters while the artist modeled him; and, in accordance with a habit which is familiar to him in dictating, he kept blowing peas, or making other grimaces fatal to the purposes of the sculptor. The artist was in despair, and saw no other course open to him but to return, or to fall into a violent fever at Ferney. At length, on the last day, the conversation turned, happily for the project, upon Aaron's golden calf. The patriarch was so well pleased at Pigalle's declaring that the casting of such a statue would require at least six months that, during the rest of the sitting, the artist did whatever he liked with him, and succeeded in making a model to his mind. He was so afraid of spoiling what he had done, in a second sitting, that he had the mould made immediately by his assistant, and set out very early the next morning, without seeing any one."[1]

Baron Grimm was probably right in assigning M. Pigalle's success to the golden calf of Aaron. A few days after the sculptor's departure, Voltaire wrote to the Count of Schon-

[1] Correspondance Littéraire, volume vii. page 23.

berg: "I conversed much with Pigalle upon the calf of gold which was cast in one night by the high priest Aaron. He swore to me that he could not make such a figure in less than six months; from which I piously concluded that God wrought a miracle to erect the golden calf in a single night, and to have the pleasure of punishing with death the twenty-three thousand Jews who murmured at his being too long in writing his two tables." In the article "Fonte" [casting] of the "Philosophical Dictionary," he gives in great detail the process of casting a statue in metal; repeating, doubtless, the information derived on this occasion from Pigalle. It is one of the most amusing articles of the whole work, as well as one of the most effective for the author's purpose. In the course of it, he said, "I asked, a long time ago, the Phidias of France, M. Pigalle, how long it would take him to make a horse [in bronze] three feet high. He answered me in writing: 'I require six months, at least.' I have his declaration, dated June 3, 1770."

The statue disappointed the generation that saw it first, and gratifies only the curiosity of the generation that sees it now; for it is the naked figure, seated, of a very meagre old man. Fréron said of it that it was not important "posterity should count the ribs of M. de Voltaire." Posterity, which sees it at present in the library of the Institute at Paris, can count those ribs if it pleases, and, upon the whole, is not ill-pleased to see the veritable likeness of the man. The head and the carriage of the head convey an idea of the power that dwelt within him, and extort the admiration of students. Some connoisseurs have found the work impressive and commanding in a high degree. For his own part, though he would have preferred showing himself dressed to posterity, he deferred to the artist's trained judgment. "Naked or clothed," he wrote, "all 's one to me. I shall not inspire any ideas *malhonnêtes* in the ladies, however I may be presented to them. M. Pigalle must be left absolute master of his statue. In a matter belonging to the fine arts, it is a crime to put shackles upon genius."

The statue did not escape the epigrams which then tempered despotism of all kinds. One ended thus: "'It is a monster!' cried a certain scribbler, on seeing it. 'If it is a monster,' said another, 'it is certainly *he!*'" Another wound

up with a pleasant line: "If he had not written, he had assassinated." The caricaturists, also, seized the chance, and represented Religion calling down the thunder-bolts upon the statue, to the great joy of a group of priests. But another artist parodied this work by representing Imagination handing to the statue the torch of Genius, to the biting regret of Envy and Stupidity wallowing in the mire at its feet.

The importance of an author is to be measured finally by the influence he exerts. A hundred indications in the records of that period show that Voltaire had made a conquest of its educated intellect. "Good company" was on his side to such a degree, as Madame du Deffand frequently remarks, that belief in the Christian miracles was as extinct as belief in the Greek mythology. Dr. Priestley, who was in Paris in 1774, reports, "*All* the philosophical persons to whom I was introduced were unbelievers in Christianity, and even professed atheists." His range of acquaintance could not have been very extensive, or he would have met a large number of unbelievers who were not atheists. The scenes which the Abbé Morellet describes as occurring at the dinners given to the philosophers twice a week by Baron d'Holbach show that the deists sometimes held their own against the more positive and aggressive atheists. The influence of Voltaire appeared in the tolerance and good humor that prevailed in both parties; and, chiefly, in the fact that such topics were frequently discussed in such circles. It was he who had lifted the mind of the generation to the height of choosing subjects of that nature, and of considering them without passion, prejudice, or fear. At Baron d'Holbach's Sunday and Thursday dinners the abbé had met Dr. Priestley, as well as Franklin, Garrick, Hume, Wilkes, Barré, and other Englishmen. Dr. Priestley lost much in not being present on occasions described by Morellet, when he would have discovered that there were some philosophers still in France who were not atheists.

The worthy abbé dwells much upon the excellent temper with which these high subjects were discussed. It was owing in a great degree to their having been "taken out of" religion, with which, indeed, they have no more to do than questions of chemistry. He mentions that all the company were secretly convinced for many years that the Baron d'Holbach was the

author of the "Système de la Nature," but never imparted the conviction, even to one another, for fear of compromising their host. The baron was at once the most unswerving foe of supernaturalism and the most genial and generous friend of man whom Paris then held. If Dr. Priestley, as is probable, sat next to the head of the table, as the honored guest, he may well have derived the impression which he records in his diary: the baron himself being atheist enough for a large city.

In the very fashions of the day the influence of Voltaire was manifest. Forty years had passed since he had revealed free England to France, — England, tolerant of opinion, to France, tolerant of all else. And, since the peace of 1763, he had embraced many opportunities of contrasting, in his humorous, bantering manner, the efficiency of the methods of freedom with the inefficiency of government by mistresses and caprice. Every visitor to France after 1768, who had seen France before the Seven Years' War, was struck with the change that had come over the aspect of things. England, her language, customs, clothes, vehicles, literature, — all were in the greatest fashion. Franklin descants upon it. Count Lauragais, writing from the French court to an English lady in 1768, mentions some of the most obvious particulars: —

"Our delicate ladies, who never ventured to stir out in the morning, run all over Paris, and in the public walks, in the genteel and loose dress of milkmaids. Our carriages are neat, plain, and convenient. Horse-races are frequent in the isle of France; our stables are full of English hunters and grooms; and our whips, saddles, and boots are manufactured by your countrymen, who have reduced ours to beggary. We have substituted paper for the tapestries of the Gobelins, and introduced in our kitchens roast-beef and pudding, in lieu of our soups, ragouts, and fricassee. We hunt, swear, drink toasts, and determine all disputes by wagers, like your nobility and gentry. Our girls, who were never allowed to pay or receive visits without a mother or an aunt, and were shut up in a nunnery, till they were often forced to marry a man whom they detested to acquire the privilege of having an intrigue with a fop of their own choice, resort to all places of diversion, without control or restraint."

These were trifles. It was the freedom of thinking which prevailed in the educated circles of France that marked the age, and it was noticeable in subjects which Voltaire and his friends had tacitly agreed not to disturb. In many ways, he had intimated to those who kept the key of the Bastille a willingness to support the royal authority, provided he could aim his shafts unmolested at the sacerdotal. Nevertheless, as both rested upon a similar basis of fiction, and were strong through the imaginations of men, neither could be successfully assailed without weakening the other. The kings already felt that they were on trial. "As long as I live," said Louis XV. at this time, "I shall be able to have my way; but I pity my grandson." "After us, the deluge!" said Pompadour. And Frederic of Prussia, in sending his subscription for the statue of Voltaire, wrote to D'Alembert, "It is a kind of consolation to me that these so much vilified kings may be of some use to philosophers. They are at least good for something."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

VISITORS AT FERNEY.

Such celebrity as Voltaire's would have drawn travelers to remote and unfrequented scenes. The growing taste for the picturesque and the increasing wealth of the leading nations brought every summer more and more visitors to Switzerland, and those visitors were chiefly of the class susceptible, at least, to the spell of a great reputation. There was no inn at Ferney then, nor any nearer than Geneva, and, in consequence, it was almost a matter of course to invite callers to dinner; often it was a kind of necessity to ask them to stay all night; and, frequently, a guest who had come only "to present his homage" found it impossible to refuse an invitation to remain. Hence Voltaire's remark that he had been for fourteen years the innkeeper of Europe. There were indeed times when the château was overwhelmed with an inundation of visitors; at other times there would be a guest or party who could not perceive that they had stayed too long. The Abbé Coyer, on arriving, frankly announced his intention to remain six weeks, or, as some versions of the story have it, to spend three months every year at Ferney. The master parried him by a conundrum. "Why, my dear abbé," said he, "are you unlike Don Quixote? He took the inns for châteaux, and you take the châteaux for inns." The abbé is said to have departed early the next morning.

It was with reference to the oppressive multitude of his visitors that Voltaire used to utter a sentence which has since become the common property of man: "I pray God to deliver me from my friends; as to my enemies, I charge myself with them." [1]

On many occasions he practiced the device of pretending to be at death's door. He sent word one day, to a strange vis-

[1] Reported by Duvernet, page 393. Paris, 1797.

itor, that he was sick. The next day the stranger called again, and Voltaire ordered him to be informed that he was dying. "And if," he added, "the persistent fellow comes again, tell him that I am dead, and even buried."[1] But such stringent messages as this did not always suffice. The pastor Gaberel relates (from Genevan tradition) that, in reply to another stranger who asked to see him, he sent the usual response, "Not at home." "But I hear his voice!" cried the visitor. "Tell him, then, that I am sick," rejoined the master of the house. "I shall feel his pulse; I am of the trade," said the intruder. "Say that I am dead," continued Voltaire. "I will bury him," said the visitor; "it will not be the first, for I am a doctor." "This is a very obstinate man; let him enter." The stranger appeared. "Well, sir," said Voltaire, "you take me, then, for a curious beast." "Yes, monsieur, for the phœnix." "Very well; know, then, that it costs twelve sous to see me." "Here are twenty-four," said the stranger, "and I will come back to-morrow." Voltaire was disarmed, and he bestowed upon the visitor his politest attentions.

Wagnière informs us that nothing was so sure or so quick to soften him toward an intruder as a happy stroke of wit. A gentleman, who, it appears, had some claims to regard, chanced to arrive at an inopportune time, and passed three days at the château without being admitted to its master's presence. As he was leaving, he sent in a stanza expressive of his disappointment: "I came here to see the genius of the place, to hear him, to speak to him, and to be instructed on every point; but, like Jesus in his eucharist, he is eaten, drunken, and never seen." The guest was immediately sent for, joyously welcomed, and retained several days.[2] Both Wagnière and Duvernet report this incident. The stanza was: —

> "Je comptais en ces lieux voir le dieu du génie,
> L'entendre, lui parler, et m'instruire en tout point;
> Mais c'est comme Jésus en son eucharistie,
> On le mange, on le boit, et l'on ne le vois point."

In spite of all precautions, strange creatures occasionally made their way to his presence, and he displayed his usual ingenuity in eluding their lumbering adulation. Among many

[1] Duvernet, page 417. Paris, 1797.
[2] Duvernet, page 416. Paris, 1797.

such anecdotes, those of the pastor Gaberel may have the merit of containing an ingredient of truth. "Monseigneur," said one worshiper, "when I see you, I see the great candle which lights the universe." "Madame Denis," replied the poet, in an animated manner, "go quick and get a pair of snuffers." A lady once interrupted him to say, "Ah, monsieur, you have labored well for posterity." "Yes, madame," he replied, "I have planted four thousand feet of trees in my park." A native of the neighboring canton of Berne addressed him thus: "Monsieur de Voltaire, they say that you write against the good God. That is bad; but I hope he will forgive you. They say, too, that you jabber against religion. That is very bad also. Against our Lord Jesus Christ himself, too. That is also bad; but I hope, nevertheless, that he will pardon you, in his great mercy. But, Monsieur de Voltaire, beware of writing against Their Excellencies of Bern, our sovereign lords, for, you may rely upon it, Their Excellencies would never forgive you!"

The polite families of Geneva, as pastor Gaberel assures us, were very scrupulous as to the persons they introduced at the château. A Hungarian lord, a man of very limited mind, tormented his acquaintances in Geneva to obtain the favor of a presentation. In order to relieve their relations from his importunities, some young men undertook to satisfy him without troubling Voltaire. They conveyed him one evening to the country in a close carriage, and, on arriving at a house, they were received by two lackeys in Voltaire's livery. The stranger, being introduced into a drawing-room very dimly lighted, discovered upon a sofa an old man wrapped in a dressing-gown, his face hidden by an immense wig. With a hollow cough and speaking low, he received the stranger very politely, made him relate his travels, and told him some gay anecdotes. The magyar asked if the papers upon the table were not some new masterpiece. "Far from it," quavered the old man in the peruke. "It is but a feeble child of my old age, a tragedy." "May I ask the title of it?" "Oh," said the old man, "my tragedy is upon a subject dear to the children of Geneva, the History of the famous Empro Giriaud. The principal characters are his not less celebrated companions, Carrain, Carreau, Dupuis, Simon,"[1] etc. Then he declaimed

[1] Names belonging to a game familiar to the boys of Geneva.

some verses of the new masterpiece. The visit having ended, the enthusiastic Hungarian placed a large reward in the hands of the lackeys and friends of the pseudo-Voltaire. The joke was kept up at the expense of the magyar; for with his own money his perfidious friends gave him a supper, at which, before a numerous company, they made him relate his adventure in all its details. When Voltaire learned this pleasantry, he wished to see his other self in costume, and said to him, "I would willingly share my glory with you if you would charge yourself with half my admirers."

On the other hand, when he expected visitors who had claims upon his attention, he welcomed them with the punctilious courtesy of the period. He dressed himself with care, received them at the door of his château, and with ingenious tact anticipated and prevented their eulogium by speaking to them of their own family and affairs. A nobleman said to Duvernet, "All the time I was with him he talked to me of my ancestors, relating many interesting anecdotes which exhibited them in a brilliant light, most of which were unknown to me. But what struck me most was that, notwithstanding his great age, he animated all that he said by the bright expression of his eyes and his air of mingled gayety and politeness."

Every few months during the last fifteen or twenty years of his life, there would go the round of the gazettes an "Extract from a Letter from Ferney," in which some one of the crowd of visitors gave an account of his intercourse with the "patriarch of literature." A considerable volume of such "interviews" could be gathered, most of which contain some gleams of the man, and all are in some particulars erroneous or exaggerated. Thus, for example: "They pretend that Voltaire never goes out for a walk without the Bible, alleging that when one has a lawsuit on his hands it is necessary to study the *factums* of his adversary." He did not take a Bible with him when he walked; but he did once, in a gay moment, make a remark similar to the one attributed to him concerning the *factums*. One "Extract" of 1768 ends with an anecdote of rare quality: —

"Have no uneasiness [wrote this anonymous interviewer] with regard to the health of M. de Voltaire. That great man, accustomed

to say that he is dying for fifty years, is marvelously well. He complains of being deaf and blind. The fact is that he still reads without spectacles, and hears remarkably well. He is dry and alert; a little bent, also. On the day when I had the honor of seeing him, he wore large shoes, white stockings *roulés*, a small peruke, linen sleeves which covered all his hands, and a Persian dressing-gown. He made us many excuses for not being dressed; but he is never otherwise. He came late to dinner. A large arm-chair had been reserved for him, in which this illustrious old man sat, eating freely of vegetables, pastry, fruits, and other things. He sparkled with wit. He could be reproached with being too emphatic, and for not having in conversation that knightly tone which so well characterizes the style of his writings. After dinner he took us to his library, which is very large, very numerous, and very fine. He read us some passages from rare books upon religion; that is, against religion, for that is at present his mania. He recurs without ceasing to that subject. He played at chess with Father Adam, who, without being the first man in the world, is Jesuit enough to let himself be beaten; M. de Voltaire would never forgive his winning. Afterwards, little games were played, and then we began to tell stories of robbers. Every lady having told her tale, M. de Voltaire was urged to take his turn. He began thus: 'Ladies, once upon a time there was a farmer-general. By my faith, I have forgotten the rest.' We left him after this epigram, which was surely the best he had made that day."

The author of this letter was mistaken upon one point: Father Adam was the last man in the world to let himself be beaten at chess. La Harpe, who spent a whole year in Ferney, on filial terms with the master of the château, writes thus: "I saw them play chess every day for a year; and not only did Father Adam not show any complaisance, though in all other things he was more than complaisant, but I can attest that he often played with ill-temper, especially when he lost, and that he was very far from losing on purpose. On the contrary, I have never seen Voltaire in ill-humor over this game, and I played often with him. He even put much gayety into his play, and one of his familiar tricks was to tell stories to distract the attention of his antagonist when he was in a bad position. He was extremely fond of chess, and reproached himself for losing so much time at the game, as he valued his time for the use which he knew how to make of it. 'To spend two hours,' he would say, 'in moving little pieces of wood! A scene could be written in that time.'"

An "Extract" of the following year, 1769, returns to the health of the master, and to his complaints of being deaf, blind, and lame: "I let him complain, and, to put him to the test, in a walk which we took together in the garden, I gradually lowered my voice to the humble tone with which we speak to ministers, to people whom we respect the most. I reassured myself as to his ears. Then, after the compliments which I made him upon the beauty of his garden and the flowers, he began to swear about his gardener, protesting he took no care of them, and, while swearing, he snatched up from time to time some very fine weeds, far apart, from under the leaves of his tulips, which I had all the trouble in the world to see without bending. I concluded thence that his eyes were still very good; and from the ease with which he stooped and rose again I inferred that his joints were very flexible."

He was, in truth, at times wonderfully alert, for his age. Another anonymous visitor of about the same time gives an instance: "Methinks I see him now, with his whip in his hand, calling the whole house to go hunting: *To the chase! to the chase!* And when he had assembled everybody it was only to have them walk round his house and brush down the spiders and their webs, which the servants had neglected, among the pillars of each portico of the château."

Another letter gives this incident: "A servant, with whom he was in a passion, cried out as he ran away, 'Monsieur, you must have the devil in you!' Voltaire replied, in his most amiable manner, 'Ah, my friend, I have something worse than the devil; for I have in my head an abominable tyrant, whom I wish to stab, to prevent his treating very badly a worthy princess. I cannot succeed in doing it, and that is what puts me in a fury.'"

There are many similar anecdotes of his extreme absorption in the affairs of the drama. The following appears in several varying versions: Cramer, his Genevan publisher, was one of the dramatic company of the château, — a man of handsome proportions, who looked every inch a king upon the little stage. As he was finishing a part at rehearsal, one day, Voltaire cried out, "Cramer, you lived like a prince during the other four acts, but in the fifth you die like a bookseller!" Dr. Tronchin remonstrated, and asked him how he could ex-

pect to have gentlemen incur the expense of dresses and the labor of learning such long parts, if he scolded them so severely. Voltaire replied, "I pray you, doctor, when you have any kings to kill, kill them your own way, but let me kill mine as I please."

Most of his domestics were liable to be impressed into the service. His coachman did not come upon the stage in time, one evening, to lay him down properly at the moment of his death, which led to much inconvenience. The dead man rose, and asked the coachman to write him a receipt in full; "for, I am sure," said he, "I must be in your debt, or you would not have let me die thus like a beggar." This calls to mind his famous reply to the Duke de Villars, who was much concerned in the Tourney theatre. One day, reports Wagnière, after a presentation of the "Orphan of China" at Tourney, when the Duke de Villars had played the part of Gengis-kan, the duke asked the author how he thought he had played. Voltaire replied, with polite vivacity, "Monseigneur, you played like a duke and peer."

His delight in the drama was such that he still hailed with rapture the promise of excellence in a young dramatist; from early manhood to extreme old age, he continued his quest for the poet who should sustain the glory of the French theatre. No visitor was so sure of a welcome as a promising young author with a play in his portmanteau. The case of the poet Chabanon is in point. He had sent various literary trifles to Ferney, he tells us in his Mémoires, which the master politely acknowledged, and, in 1766, he presented himself at the château, without other introduction. Voltaire not only gave him a cordial welcome, but detained him many months, during which the young author was a member of the family and a sharer of all its pleasures. The patriarch was indeed enchanted with his candid, enthusiastic guest, though his dramatic gift finally proved to be inadequate. Chabanon, however, was a man of more than one talent: musician, poet, philosopher, and wit. He brought a tragedy with him, which he submitted to the lord of the château, who criticised it, as Chabanon remarked, sincerely always, if sometimes a little too severely.

"You can scarcely imagine," he says, "the ecstasy it gave

Voltaire when he had transmitted to another his own devouring ardor for study. On this subject I have heard him say a hundred times, '*I love to debauch youth!*' When an inmate of his house communicated to him some new production, he would cry out, 'Bravo, bravo, our little Ferney!' If we met one another in his park, both dreaming, he would say to me, 'Ah! are you taking a walk with *the fool of the house?*' It was the imagination that he called by this name. After he had given me some advice relative to my piece, his last word usually was, '*Simmer that down, simmer that down!*' In his society, the coldest head would become a thinking and active one."

To this most pleasing reminiscence Chabanon added other particulars of much interest.

"During the seven months [he says] which I passed that year at Ferney, we did not cease to play tragedy before Voltaire, desiring to amuse his leisure moments by a spectacle of his glory. The first piece we gave was 'Les Scythes,' which he had just finished. He played a part in it himself. I was not able to judge of his talent as an actor, because my own part put me always upon the stage with him. I should have feared to lose my hold upon my character if I had regarded his in the spirit of observation. At one of our rehearsals only I permitted myself to hear and judge the first speech he had to deliver. I felt myself powerfully moved by his declamation, emphatic and cadenced as it was. That kind of art was natural to him. In declaiming, he was both poet and actor: he made the spectator feel at once the harmony of the verses and the interest of the situation. The first requisite of the comedian he had: he felt vividly, and therefore he produced much effect.

"'The Scythians' had little success at Ferney, and the author perceived it. This truth was conveyed to him, as every truth must be imparted to kings, with circumlocutions which softened its bitterness without disguising the disagreeable fact. 'Adélaide' was asked for, when Voltaire wished to give 'The Scythians' again. On this occasion it was that he said to Madame Denis, 'I know not why they love that "Adélaide" so much.'

"Our representations were a kind of solemnity, to which people came eagerly from Geneva, from Switzerland, and from Savoy. All the places in the neighborhood were occupied with French regiments, the officers of which flocked to our theatre. Our costumes were suitable, magnificent, in harmony with the piece we played. The theatre

was pretty. The stage was provided with changeable scenes, and capable of exhibiting the splendors and prodigies of 'Sémiramis.' One day some grenadiers of the regiment of Conti served as guards upon the stage. Voltaire ordered that a supper should be prepared for them as usual, and that whatever compensation they asked should be given them. One of them replied, 'We will accept nothing. We have seen M. de Voltaire; that is our payment.' Voltaire heard this reply. He was delighted with it. 'Oh my brave grenadiers!' he cried, with transport. 'Oh my brave grenadiers!' He invited them to come and take a meal at the château as often as they pleased, and said they should be employed profitably for themselves, if they wished to labor.

"The course of events, in fact, had made the château the headquarters of the little army which may be said to have invested Geneva. The colonel of the regiment of Conti lived in the château, and three companies were quartered in the village. So far from complaining of this as an intrusion, the lord of Ferney was enchanted to lodge the soldiers of the king, and many of them, it appears, accepted his invitation to labor. 'The soldiers,' he wrote to a friend at the time, 'are making roads for me, and the grenadiers are planting trees.' With regard to fire, there are people who pretend that Geneva will be in flames this winter. I believe nothing of it; but if they attempt to burn Ferney and Tourney, the regiment of Conti and the Flanders legion, who occupy my poor villages, will gayly come to my defense.'"

There was something very remarkable in the patience and docility with which a person so irritable submitted to the arrogance of younger men to whom he was attached, or in whom he discerned promising ability. Few young authors ever appeared more self-sufficient than La Harpe, who failed as a dramatist and became the most distinguished critic in Europe. He was born in extreme poverty, of a family of noble rank; he was reared, to his nineteenth year, by charity; and, after working his way to education, and producing one not unsuccessful tragedy, "Warwick," he contracted a marriage with the daughter of a lemonade woman, instead of abandoning her to her fate, in the mode prescribed. Without resources, he and his agreeable wife sought an asylum at Ferney, where they were entertained and retained more than a year, as children of the house and of the Muses. Chabanon was with them there, and gives some instances of Voltaire's wondrous forbearance toward the exacting and positive young poet.

"La Harpe, one day [he says], objected to a criticism of a poem, which the patriarch had expressed with all the deference and gentleness possible. The defense was less amiable than the attack. Any other than Voltaire would have taken offense when the young poet said to him, 'Let us speak no more of it; the passage will surely remain as it is!' Far from being discouraged by this reply, which was at least vigorous, the old man rejoined, 'My son, you will make me die of mortification if you do not change the metaphor.' A metaphor, indeed, was the cause of all this noise. Oh, the frivolous minds of men! La Harpe, in speaking of commerce, had written, '*This great tree of commerce extending far its fruitful branches.*' Voltaire condemned the figure, maintaining that a tree, being motionless from its nature, could not serve as an emblem of commerce, which was inseparable from movement.

"I kept silence during this long debate, in which the ill-assorted tones of the two contestants caused me so much surprise. Summoned several times to give my opinion, I decided in favor of La Harpe. 'The two metaphors,' said I, 'of the *branches* of commerce and of the *fruits* of commerce are generally received; then you have all the tree.' 'Humph!' said Voltaire, 'there is some truth in that; but my son will not the less fell his tree.'"[1]

Another visitor, Charles Pougens, relates a similar scene between La Harpe and the patriarch: —

"The excessive irritability of La Harpe was so visible that even M. de Voltaire, his master, to whom he assuredly owed great consideration and some gratitude, was not safe against the attacks of his ill-humor. One day, at Ferney, La Harpe read to Voltaire some scenes of a tragedy, which, as usual, he thought excellent, because generally they cost him a great deal of trouble to write. The illustrious author of 'Zaïre,' 'Mérope,' and 'Brutus' said to him, 'Come, Petit' (this was the pet name by which he called La Harpe), 'read me again all that scene; perhaps I have misunderstood it.' La Harpe began again. Then Voltaire wished to make some observations. The young poet flew into a passion, and ended by saying offensive things to his master. 'Ah! Petit is angry,' replied the patriarch, laughing with all his might. Happily, dinner was announced, and La Harpe, who was not insensible to the pleasures of the table, was appeased."[2]

Chabanon records also that the young poet did not hesitate to take great liberties with the works of his master. In the

[1] Tableau de Quelques Circumstances de ma Vie. Par Chabanon. Page 144.
[2] Lettres Philosophiques. Par Charles Pougens. Page 36.

private theatricals he played a leading part in one of Voltaire's tragedies. "Papa," said he to Voltaire, "I have changed some verses of my part, which appeared to me feeble." "Let me hear them, my son," said the aged poet. The young man recited them, while the author listened attentively. "Good, my son," said he; "that goes better. Always change in the same way, and I can only gain by it." Emboldened by impunity, or, rather, by the applause bestowed on his amendments, La Harpe cut and altered a new piece without notifying Voltaire, who pricked up his ears on hearing these unexpected changes. Far from being angry, he cried out from his seat, "He is right; it is better so!"

He became indeed warmly attached to La Harpe, as well as to his wife, who also wrote verses, and bore her part well in the life of the château. Desirous to place them in Paris with some certain resources, so indispensable then, and always, to a becoming literary career, he besought from the comptroller-general permission to settle half of his own royal pension of two thousand francs a year upon the young author; asking the minister to give it in the king's name, and not to mention his own agency in the benefaction. This letter of Voltaire to the minister was found, a few years ago, with seventy-two others, in a grocer's shop in Paris, whence they were rescued by a happy chance, and now await the next editor of the correspondence. It is an excellent specimen of Voltaire's manner on such occasions.

"Mr. Comptroller-General, — If it were necessary in France to pension all the men of talent, it would be, I am aware, a wound for your finances, very honorable, it is true, but very disastrous, and the treasury could not suffice for it. Hence, although few men can be met of a merit as solid as that of M. de la Harpe, I do not presume to claim for him a pension for merit in indigence; I desire simply to encroach upon your prerogatives, and correct the item [*contrôler le chiffre*] of two thousand livres, with which his majesty has been pleased to gratify me. It seems to me that, as M. de la Harpe has no pension, mine is too large by half, and that it ought to be divided between him and me. I should therefore be most grateful to you, monsieur, if you would be pleased to sanction this arrangement, and cause to be forwarded to M. de la Harpe the warrant for his pension of a thousand francs, without letting him know that I have had any part in the mat-

ter. He will be easily persuaded, as will every one else, that this pension is a just recompense for the services which he has rendered to literature." [1]

The request was not granted. Perhaps some of La Harpe's college escapades, which had caused his imprisonment for several months, were remembered against him. He was never informed of this attempt to serve him.

Such bountiful entertainment of hopeful dramatists at Ferney had an effect similar to that which followed the marriage of Mademoiselle Corneille. It attracted other dramatists, whose works proved less interesting.

It is to be regretted that so few of "the brethren" of the Encyclopædia left records in detail of their visits to Ferney. Marmontel, whose agreeable narrative we have read, was a literary man, rather than a philosopher. Diderot never saw Ferney. Damilaville wrote nothing of his visit that has been preserved. D'Alembert was twice at Ferney; the last time in 1770. The King of Prussia, whose Paris correspondent he then was, hearing that his health was much broken, urged him to try the tour of Italy, and sent him six thousand francs for his expenses. D'Alembert took the road to Ferney, intending to make his way thence to Rome. In two months, to the surprise of his friends, he was at home again in Paris, without having seen Italy. We have two explanations of the mystery. To the King of Prussia he wrote that he dreaded the fatigue of such an extensive tour in a land of bad inns; adding, "I have returned three thousand five hundred francs of the sum your majesty was pleased to grant, of which I had no need." The Abbé Duvernet gives another explanation: —

"Toward the end of 1770, D'Alembert left Paris for the tour of Italy, and stopped at Ferney on his way, intending to remain but a few days. The charm of Voltaire's unequaled conversation detained him nearly a month, and he returned to Paris without having seen the Italian sky. He said to me, on his arrival at home, 'For almost a month I was in admiration. What constantly astonished me was the manner, at once learned and light, with which he discussed the profoundest subjects. I desired to go to Italy in quest of health, and I found it at Ferney. The pleasure of living and conversing

[1] Voltaire et Genève. Par Gustave Desnoiresterres. Page 192.

with the first philosopher of the age made me lose the desire I had of going to Rome to see the first magician of Europe.'"

Duvernet remarks that Voltaire was never in his best mood in a large company, particularly a company which had come to the château, as he used to say, *to see the rhinoceros.* In a small circle, or with a single D'Alembert, he poured out all the wealth of his gathered stores, continuing to converse sometimes until two or three in the morning. He cordially returned D'Alembert's affection. One of his German visitors asked him, one day, to write his name in an album, with that "something else," that "anything you please," which is so embarrassing to a preoccupied mind. Voltaire, after declining, turned over the pages of the album, and saw the name of D'Alembert. He wrote his own name under it, with this sentiment in Latin, "He was the friend of D'Alembert" (*Hic fuit Dalemberti amicus*).[1]

Several noted visitors to the patriarch of letters left extensive records of their conversations with him. Among the rest it was inevitable that many British travelers should find their way to a spot so convenient and so famous. Voltaire's interest in English matters never ceased, and he kept up with the literature of England with much diligence. When Boswell was at Ferney, in 1766, he even affected the English roughness of speech, and called Dr. Johnson "a superstitious dog." Boswell tells us that he mollified him by telling him what Johnson had said of the King of Prussia's works. "He writes," Johnson had once said, "just as you may suppose Voltaire's foot-boy to do who has been his amanuensis." Upon hearing this he again tried the English manner, saying that Dr. Johnson was "a very honest fellow." It was on this occasion that Voltaire said, "Pope drives a handsome chariot, with a couple of neat, trim nags; Dryden, a coach and six stately horses." Boswell visited Rousseau, also, and was much pleased with him; upon reporting which to the burly monster of prejudice, Johnson roared out, "Rousseau, sir, is a very bad man! I would sign a sentence for his transportation sooner than that of any felon who has gone from the Old Bailey these many years." Boswell asked, "Sir, do you think he is

[1] Journal de Paris, September 8, 1778.

as bad a man as Voltaire?" Johnson replied, "Why, sir, it is difficult to settle the proportion of iniquity between them."

Voltaire used to compare the English to their own beer: froth at the top, dregs at the bottom, and the middle excellent.

Speaking of the history of England, he once said, "The hangman should write their history, for he has usually settled their disputes."

Charles James Fox, a youth of nineteen, passed through Switzerland, on his way home from Italy, in 1768. Voltaire had received his elder brother at Les Délices some years before. Unfortunately, we have no account of the visit of Charles Fox to Ferney, except a slight notice written fifty-six years afterwards by his traveling companion, Mr. U. Price. In reply to Fox's note asking permission to call, Voltaire said that the name of Fox sufficed, though he scarcely received any visitors, and that they "had come to bury him;" which, on referring to his letters of the time, we conjecture to mean that he had been suffering from a bad cold. "He did not," says Mr. Price, "ask us to dine with him, but conversed a short time, walking backward and forward in his garden, gave us some chocolate, and dismissed us. All I can recollect of his conversation is that, after giving us a list of some of his works, which he thought might open our minds and free us from any religious prejudices, he said, 'These are some of the works with which you should fortify yourselves.'" [1]

There is an amusing anecdote of an English visitor, which has been printed in perhaps twenty different versions. The best authority for it is that of Wagnière, who gives it thus: —

"M. Milles, an Englishman, on his way to Rome, visited Ferney, and asked M. de Voltaire if he had not some orders to give him for that city. Voltaire replied, 'No; but if, by chance, you meet the Grand Inquisitor, I beg you to bring me back his ears wrapped in a piece of music paper.' The Englishman did not understand the jest, and took the words in their literal sense. When he reached Rome, he spoke of the commission which M. de Voltaire had given him. His remarks reached the ears of the Pope, Clement XIV., and when M. Milles had his audience of the Pope his Holiness said to him, 'M. de Voltaire, as I learn, has given you some orders for this country. I

[1] Memorials of Charles James Fox. By Lord Russell. Volume i., page 59.

pray you, when you see him again, to say to him that his commission is not feasible, because to-day the Grand Inquisitor has neither ears nor eyes!' This incident made some noise at Rome, and M. de Voltaire was informed of it. He wrote about it to the Cardinal de Bernis, then French ambassador at Rome, and added to his letter some pretty verses for the Pope. The cardinal replied that the Pope had taken in good part the pleasantries of M. de Voltaire, as well in verse as in prose, that he desired to see him more holy, and that he was flattered with his esteem."

In 1770, Dr. Charles Burney, the English composer, now remembered as the father of Fanny Burney, the novelist, made his musical tour of Europe. He heard Voltaire converse, and Frederic play the flute. The reader will be interested in an enthusiast's account of his visit to Ferney.

DR. CHARLES BURNEY'S NARRATIVE.

"I approached his house with reverence and a curiosity of the most minute kind. I inquired *when* I first trod on his domain; I had an intelligent and talkative postilion, who answered all my questions very satisfactorily. Voltaire's estate is very large here, and he is building pretty farm-houses upon it. He has erected on the Geneva side a quadrangular *justice*, or gallows, to show that he is the seigneur. One of his farms, or rather manufacturing houses, — for he is establishing a manufacture upon his estate, — was so handsome that I thought it was his château. We drove to Ferney through a charming country, covered with corn and vines, in view of the lake and mountains of Gex, Switzerland, and Savoy. On the left hand, approaching the house, is a neat chapel, with this inscription:—

DEO
EREXIT
VOLTAIRE,
M DCC LXI.

"I sent to inquire whether a stranger might be allowed to see the house and gardens, and was answered in the affirmative. A servant soon came and conducted me into the cabinet or closet where his master had just been writing, which is never shown when he is at home; but he having walked out, I was allowed that privilege. From thence I passed to the library, which is not a very large one, but well filled. Here I found a whole-length figure in marble of himself, recumbent in one of the windows, and many curiosities in another room: a bust of himself, made not two years since; his mother's picture; that of his niece, Madame Denis; of his brother, M. Dupuis; of the Calas family,

and others. It is a very neat and elegant house, not large, nor affectedly decorated.

"I should first have remarked that, close to the chapel, between that and the house, is the theatre, which he built some years ago, where he treated his friends with some of his own tragedies; it is now only used as a receptacle for wood and lumber, there having been no play acted in it these four years. The servant told me his master was seventy-eight, but very well. '*Il travaille*,' said he, '*pendant dix heures chaque jour*.' He studies ten hours every day, writes constantly without spectacles, and walks out with only a domestic, often a mile or two. '*Et le voilà, là bas!*' (And see yonder where he is!)

"He was going to his workmen. My heart leaped at the sight of so extraordinary a man. He had just then quitted his garden, and was crossing the court before his house. Seeing my chaise, and me on the point of mounting it, he made a sign to his servant who had been my cicerone to come to him, in order, I suppose, to inquire who I was. After they had exchanged a few words together, he approached the place where I stood motionless in order to contemplate his person as much as I could when his eyes were turned from me; but, on seeing him move toward me, I found myself drawn by some irresistible power toward him, and, without knowing what I did, I insensibly met him half-way.

"It is not easy to conceive it possible for life to subsist in a form so nearly composed of mere skin and bone as that of M. de Voltaire. He complained of decrepitude, and said he supposed I was curious to form an idea of the figure of one walking after death. However, his eyes and whole countenance are still full of fire, and, though so emaciated, a more lively expression cannot be imagined.

"He inquired after English news, and observed that poetical squabbles had given way to political ones; but he seemed to think the spirit of opposition as necessary in poetry as in politics. '*Les querelles d'autres sont pour le bien de la littérature, comme dans un gouvernement libre les querelles des grands et les clameurs des petits sont necessaires à la liberté*.'[1] And added, 'When critics are silent, it does not so much prove the age to be correct as dull.' He inquired what poets we had now; I told him that we had Mason and Gray. 'They write but little,' said he, 'and you have no one who lords it over the rest, like Dryden, Pope, and Swift.' I told him that it was one of the inconveniences of periodical journals, however well executed, that they often silenced modest men of genius, while impudent blockheads were impenetrable, and unable to feel the critic's scourge; that Mr.

[1] Disputes among authors are of use to literature, as the quarrels of the great and the clamors of the little, in a free government, are necessary to liberty.

Gray and Mr. Mason had both been illiberally treated by mechanical critics, even in newspapers; and added that modesty and love of quiet seemed, in these gentlemen, to have got the better even of their love of fame.

"During this conversation, we approached the buildings that he was constructing near the road to his château. 'These,' said he, pointing to them, 'are the most innocent, and perhaps the most useful, of all my works.' I observed that he had other works, which were of far more extensive use, and would be much more durable than those. He was so obliging as to show me several farm-houses that he had built, and the plans of others; after which I took my leave, for fear of breaking in upon his time, being unwilling to rob the public of things so precious as the few remaining moments of this great and universal genius."[1]

It must not be supposed that all his visitors approached him in this reverential spirit. He employed artifice, sometimes, to ascertain, before launching into free conversation, whether or not his guest was "in the movement." A court lady of high rank, a daughter of M. de Nivernois, visiting Ferney, spoke with enthusiasm of the mighty Alps, in full view from the garden. Voltaire seized the opportunity to learn whether she was of the communion of her mother, who was a devout Catholic, or of her father, who professed to be a follower of Confucius. "Yes," said he, "these mountains are magnificent horrors, as it is from them that come to us colds, catarrhs, and fevers. Madame would render a great service to the country if she would be pleased to remove them farther away; a little grain of her faith would suffice for that." "I am very sorry for it, monsieur," she replied, "but those mountains will remain where they are." It was enough. She had read her Philosophical Dictionary. From that moment the conversation could be free and agreeable.

Sometimes it was otherwise. A Genevan lady, as pastor Gaberel reports, visited him one day, accompanied by her little daughter. Voltaire found the child much to his taste, and hastened to render her a service in his own way. "What a charming little creature!" he exclaimed. "She is, I think, as studious as she is beautiful?" "Oh, yes, monsieur," re-

[1] Present State of Music in France and Italy. By Charles Burney, Mus. D. London, 1779. Page 57.

plied the mother; "nevertheless, there is one thing which she cannot learn." "What is that, then?" "It is her catechism." "And why is that?" "She comprehends nothing of it!" "Oh!" cried Voltaire, "what intelligence you possess, my little dear! You do not comprehend it? Ah! from the mouths of children comes the truth! You do not understand your catechism? Here, my child, see this magnificent peach-tree! Pick as many as you wish!" The poor mother was dismayed at this unexpected turn.

The pastor adds that a traveler who visited Geneva at this period experienced much embarrassment. "One day," said this stranger, "I dined at a house where a rolling fire of pleasantries brought from Ferney enlivened the company. The next day I was at the house of people of the same name, where I wished to repeat some of the anti-Christian jests with which I had been regaled the evening before. A polite remark of the lady of the house notified me that her guests respected the gospel. Nevertheless, it appears to me that almost one third of the rich families are infatuated with Voltaire, and his success is not less great among the artisans."

The Ferney stories to which this traveler alludes were well calculated to enliven the dinner-table. "If you subtract pride from priests," remarked a visitor, "nothing remains." Voltaire said, "Then, sir, you count gluttony nothing." Being asked what he thought the age of the world might be, he replied, "I know not; the world is an old coquette who conceals her age."

Once, in these late years of his life, he had the pleasure of entertaining at Ferney two sons of his ancient English friend and host, Sir Everard Falkener, long before deceased. The young men took Ferney on their way to Italy, and received the warmest welcome there. He could tell them of their father as he was in his bachelor days, fifty years before. Being seated between the brothers at his own table, he took them by the hand, and said with emotion, "*Mon Dieu!* how happy I am to find myself between two Falkeners."[1]

We are apt to suppose, from the alertness and gayety which marked his demeanor and his letters, that he passed his life with little fear of the manifold and extreme perils which al-

[1] 1 Lettres Inédites, 75.

ways encompassed him. Duvernet, who had particular means of knowing, from his intimacy with the Voltairean circle at Paris, informs us that he was liable to fits of panic. In his later years, Duvernet intimates it was the dread of crazy zealots which troubled him most. The Clements, the Damiens, the Ravaillacs, he would say, thought to please God by assassinating kings.

"'Who can assure me that the same poison which set those wretches on fire will not madden the weak brain of some fanatic? Who can assure me that a priest of Savoy, regarding me as the enemy of God because I am the enemy of his prejudices, will not come here in the hope of atoning for his sins and gaining Paradise by devoutly assassinating me?'

"These terrors, indeed, he did not experience every day. Often he escaped them by going alone to visit his gardens, orchards, stables; to see his plantations, his fields, his flocks; to lose himself in his woods, and there regain his tranquillity. He would visit and encourage his tenants of the village, exhorting some to patience and labor, others to justice and union. When he appeared in the streets of Ferney he was at once surrounded by a multitude of inhabitants. Men and women, young and old, artists and laborers, Protestants and Catholics, all pressed about him, and listened to him with eagerness. They questioned him with a respectful familiarity, and he replied with kindness and indulgence, speaking in such a way as to be understood by all. His life was truly patriarchal.

"Despite all the happiness which he enjoyed in making others happy, it is true that the fear which he had of fanatics was only too well founded. This apprehension was the consequence of a multitude of anonymous letters, by which Christian charity pleased itself with tormenting him. Most of those letters seemed to come from madhouses, and it was this which indicated the danger. One would write to him in the name of the Eternal Father, and another in the name of the devil; one called him the eldest son of Beelzebub, and another a brand from hell. One, to recompense him for the harm which he had done the church, threatened to burn his house; and another, exhorting him to prepare for death, threatened to kill him. These pious notifications, which he always began by ridiculing, very often awoke in him a feeling of alarm, of which he could not rid himself, especially when he reflected upon all the efforts he had made during fifty years to uproot superstition everywhere. Voltaire could reasonably fear to be punished for it. An ill-instructed devotee permits himself to take vengeance when he imagines that it pleases God.

"As he was walking, one day, in his gardens, while the thunder was rolling heavily, the son of Marshal Villars thought he perceived in him a movement of fear. 'Are you, then, afraid of the thunder, Mr. Philosopher?' said he. Voltaire replied, 'Yes; and I am still more afraid of the priests and monks, considering all the advantages they would derive from my death. They would say from their pulpits that God had stricken me with lightning only because I had ridiculed *them*. The foolish people would believe them, and the progress of philosophy would be put back half a century. Let us go into the house.'"[1]

There were times, too, when his extreme susceptibility overcame him in another way. There were moments when he was seized with compassion for the unhappiness of our weak and heavy-laden race; and this was particularly apt to be the case when he was occupied with history. "Ah, my friends," said he, one day, looking up from his work with moist eyes, "how miserable men have been! How they were to be pitied in past times! And their lot was pitiable only because they were fools and cowards!"

[1] Duvernet, page 427. Paris, 1797.

CHAPTER XL.

THE NEW REIGN.

OLD things, meanwhile, were passing away in France. May 10, 1774, Louis XV., who for more than fifty-nine years had been styled King of France, died, and his grandson Louis XVI. reigned in his stead. The old king lived his scandalous life to the last moment of possibility; then he confessed, and received absolution; the chief priest saying, "Although the king owes an account of his conduct to God alone, he is sorry to have caused scandal to his subjects, and declares that he wishes to live henceforward only to be the support of the faith and of religion, and for the happiness of his subjects."

We must beware of believing too readily any of the court anecdotes of that period, or any other period; but, if there is only a small portion of truth in the stories printed of this unfortunate man's last days, we must admit that the morals and the manners of his part of the palace were lower than those of a Zulu kraal. The priests gave him prompt absolution, and buried him in extremely "consecrated ground," amid the contemptuous indifference of the people of France. Perhaps no one judged him more charitably than his brother king, Frederic of Prussia, who wrote thus to Voltaire, January 5, 1775:

"If Louis XV. had a weakness for the clergy, it was quite natural. He was reared by priests in superstition the most stupid, and he was surrounded all his life either by devotees, or by persons who were too good courtiers to shock his prejudices. How often was it said to him, 'Sire, God placed you upon the throne to protect the church. The sword which he put into your hand is to defend the church. You bear the name of Most Christian King only to be the scourge of heresy and unbelief. The church is the true bulwark of the throne; its priests are divine organs, who preach submission to the people. They hold consciences in their hands; you are more the master of your subjects through their voices than through your armies.' Let

such discourses be often repeated to a man who lives in dissipation, and who employs not a single moment of his life in reflection, he will believe them, and act accordingly. This was the case with Louis XV. I pity him, and condemn him not."

In writing these words the King of Prussia gave the secret of many courts and composed the history of many kings. Voltaire, also, had his word on this occasion. He was, as Frenchmen usually are, an attentive observer of public events. He had a public mind. Readers of his works will recall many urgent and even passionate pleas for public improvements, major and minor, from clearing the tragic stage of dandies to reforming the criminal law, from improving bee-hives to reconstructing the system of taxation. He was among the first to rebuke the abuse of royal authority in spending millions of the people's money upon the water-works of Versailles, and leaving Paris to dip a large part of its daily supply of water from the Seine with pails; and he knew how to say such things with the minimum of offense and the maximum of effect. In his essay upon the "Embellishments of Paris," written in 1749, an essay that recommends and foretells the beautiful metropolis of to-day, he remarked that the money expended upon three *bosquets* of one of the royal parks would have sufficed to beautify Paris; and he leaves the reader to imagine what would have been the effect if Louis XIV., instead of wasting four hundred millions upon three royal abodes, had possessed a public soul, and expended it in alleviating the common lot of Frenchmen. Indeed, we see in his writings, in considerable development, that spirit of public improvement which is now fast changing the aspect and condition of all human habitations, giving to all men a share of the noblest and costliest delights. He had in him much of that spirit which will one day render private magnificence shameful or ridiculous, when nothing will presume to be splendid and immense unless it is for the public.

A few days after the death of the old king he published an anonymous pamphlet of sixteen pages, entitled "Funeral Eulogium of Louis XV., Pronounced in an Academy, May 25, 1774." He contrived in this essay to delineate Louis XV. as a good-natured imbecile, without violating the conventional forms, and without using a word of harsh judgment. The exemplary daughters of the king might have read it with pleas-

ure. It was characteristic of him to select for special mention the founding of the military school upon the plans of his ancient friend and benefactor, Paris Duverney, who died four years before Louis XV. It cost the banker some years of intrigue to get the king to take the trouble merely to visit the school. Voltaire observes that, while Louis XV. did not himself conceive great projects, his judgment seized them when they were presented to him, and thus he formed L'Ecole Militaire, so useful a resource to the nobility. "It was devised by a man who was not himself noble, and with posterity it will confer greater honor than titles." Every king, he said in conclusion, has done some good. "From his successor we should expect perfect felicity, if it was in the power of men." At this point the imaginary orator broke off, to admit of the announcement of ill-news to the imaginary audience: the king's three faithful daughters had taken the small-pox, the disease of which their father had died, — which served as the occasion of an eloquent plea for inoculation.

The reign of mistresses was at an end in France. Dubarry had departed. It was necessary for Voltaire, at the age of seventy-eight, to establish new lines of defense, and ascertain how he stood with the new dispensers of power. This funeral oration, so ingenious a compromise between truth and falsehood, was a preliminary movement. Before the king was buried, he was in earnest correspondence with his guardian angel concerning his status as a citizen of France. Louis XV. had said, "I do not wish Voltaire to come to Paris." How did that affect him now? What would Louis XVI. say on the subject? He did not, it is true, wish to live in Paris, although Madame Denis longed for nothing so much; but suppose he should fancy to take a turn in that direction. Was there anything to hinder, except, of course, his unfortunate health? There had been, he could not deny, a little broil (*tracasserie*) between the defunct and himself, — a broil unknown to the greatest part of the public, verbal merely, which had left no trace after it. "It seems to me that I am an invalid who can take the air everywhere without a prescription from the doctors. Nevertheless, I should like the thing to be kept very secret. I think it would be easy to conceal myself in the crowd. There will be so many grand ceremonies, so many

grand *tracasseries*, that no one will think of mine. In a word, it would be too ridiculous that Jean-Jacques, the Genevan, should have permission to walk in the court of the archbishop, that Fréron can see 'L'Ecossaise' performed, and that I cannot go either to mass or to the theatre in the city in which I was born."

He left the management of this delicate matter to his angel, who did not advise the invalid to take the air at Paris. There were difficulties in the way. The ill-starred young king, who had sense enough to half know how cruelly misplaced he was, confided his power to the trivial Maurepas, aged seventy-three, a man of the old court, from which he had been exiled twenty-five years before. Count d'Argental could not yet give his friend an assurance of safety in Paris, and Voltaire could not risk the affront of being ordered away. The year 1774 passed, and still he was uncertain. It was not a favorable sign that his effort to rehabilitate young D'Etallonde, the companion of the Chevalier de la Barre, was steadily resisted. Then a rumor ran over Paris that he was coming! It alarmed him; it was premature; it might call attention to his case, and cause the doubtful to become certain. He entreated his friends to contradict the report. How could he go to Paris, — he, who was deaf and blind, who spent three quarters of the day in bed close to the chimney corner, who was obliged to wear always a big cap to keep his brain from addling, who took medicine three times a week, and who articulated with great difficulty, having no more teeth than he had eyes and ears! "At Paris, I could not help attending the Academy," he added, "and I should die of cold at the first session." And besides, "Could I shut my door, having no *portier*, to all the rabble of blackguards [*racaille des polissons*] self-styled people of letters, who would have the idiotic curiosity to come and see my skeleton? And then, if I should take it into my head to die in your city of Paris, imagine what an *embarras*, what scenes, and what ridicule! I am a country rat, that could not subsist at Paris unless in a hole quite unknown, and, during the short time of my stay, I should not go out of it." At present, he would not attempt even so much, but would remain snug and safe in his country hole.

Public affairs became of absorbing interest to all solvent

and patriotic men, so long outraged by the spectacle of an annually increasing deficit and an annually increasing waste. Few men have ever lived, even in frugal France, who had the instinct of solvency so strong as Voltaire. With a revenue of two hundred thousand francs per annum, he always kept his expenditure within seventy-five thousand; and if he had had but twenty francs a week he would have lived upon fifteen. He hated the odious Abbé Terrai, Louis XV.'s last finance minister, incompetent, unprincipled, and dissolute. Wagnière records that the wife of a farmer-general, knowing the difficulty of seeing him, sent in to say that she was the niece of the Abbé Terrai. Upon hearing the name of Terrai, he shuddered, and said, "Tell the lady that I have but one tooth left, and keep that for her uncle."

His joy, therefore, upon the elevation of Turgot to the control of the finances was extreme, and he hailed all his great measures with a rapture of applause. His epigram upon hearing of Turgot's accession to power was a polite way of inserting that solitary tooth of his in the uncle of his lady visitor, —

"Je crois en Turgot fermement.
Je ne sais pas ce qu'il veut faire,
Mais je sais que c'est le contraire
De ce qu'on fit jusqu'à présent."[1]

Turgot was indeed a man after his own heart. A French nobleman, descended from a line of gifted and patriotic men, himself of much experience in the government of a province, Turgot, at the age of forty-seven, found himself, through the favor of Madame de Maurepas, at the head of French finance. He had two great principles: Freedom of Trade and No Waste. Voltaire had entertained him at Ferney, and knew him well from the report of his fellow-student, the Abbé Morellet; for Turgot had been destined to one of the high places of the church, and had been two years an inmate of the Sorbonne. Voltaire helped him out of that abyss. "He knew by heart," says Morellet, "most of Voltaire's fugitive pieces, and many passages of his poems and tragedies." The Newtonian astronomy, also, he seized with avidity, and thus

[1] I believe in Turgot firmly. I do not know what he wishes to do, but I know it is the contrary of what has been done hitherto.

escaped the hideous destiny his father had chosen for him. Voltaire gave him all possible support in his well-nigh impossible task of extricating France without a convulsion. In September, 1774, when Turgot published the decree restoring free trade in grain throughout the kingdom, he sent him this note: "The old invalid of Ferney thanks nature for having made him live long enough to see the decree of council of September 13, 1774. He presents his respects and vows to the author." Soon he had to recognize his goodness in giving promotion to the brother of the late Damilaville, his justice in freeing Gex from a portion of its unequal burden, and his virtue in refusing the three hundred thousand francs which the farmers-general were accustomed, from time immemorial, to present to a new comptroller-general. "The old invalid of Ferney," he wrote to the minister, "has heard of a hundred thousand crowns belonging of right to a sage, and sent back to the royal treasury by a virtuous man. . . . . Good old man Simeon blesses God that his ears have heard of our salvation."

The minister asked the patriarch not to style him Monseigneur. Simeon could not gratify him in this. "My bishop," he replied, "who pretends to be prince of Geneva, the nobles who carry off my money and ruin my colony, are not my lords; but the author of the grain edict, the humane, enlightened, wise and beneficent minister shall be my only lord." In January, 1775, the "very old Owl of Mount Jura" thanked his "true lord" for a new edict, which allowed the butchers of Paris to sell meat during Lent. Later, when Turgot had put the last hand to the freedom of Gex, the rumor spread over Europe that Voltaire was to be made marquis of that strip of land. "Tell M. Turgot," he wrote, "that I agree with him upon my marquisate. Marquis Crébillon, Marquis Marmontel, Marquis Voltaire, would be good for nothing but to show at the fair with the monkeys."

For nearly two years Turgot held his ground, to the ever-rising hopes of disinterested observers. He was in the midst of his great career, forcing salvation upon that frivolous court when he was suddenly dismissed. A woman gave him his place, and, as it seems, a woman deprived him of it, — the queen, whose rage for expensive pleasures could not endure the check of his unrelenting economy. He was dismissed,

and the last chance of reform without revolution passed away. "Ah, *mon Dieu*," wrote Voltaire, "what fatal news I hear! France would have been too happy! What will become of us? Could you find time to reassure me by a single word? I am prostrate and desperate." The news was but too true; and, indeed, the wonder was that so great and wise a minister held his post for twenty months. Voltaire relieved his feelings by composing the tribute to Turgot, entitled "To a Man," beginning, —

> "Philosophe indulgent, ministre citoyen,
> Qui ne cherchas le vrai que pour faire le bien."[1]

After an interval of chaos, Necker was called to the department of finance. He shared in the new hopes of the country; but, by that time, France, against M. Turgot's sound advice, was committed to the American cause, and the deficit yawned wide. The outcry that arose when the king was induced to appoint a Protestant to high place called forth another epigram from Ferney, ending, —

> "On ne peut manquer son salut,
> Quand on fait celui de la France."[2]

Under Necker, as under Turgot, he continued to labor for the extinction of the remains of serfdom and the "cleansing of the Augean stable" of the criminal system. He kept the government advised that "there were still Frenchmen who were in the same legal condition as the beasts of the land which they watered with their tears." In his various petitions and memoirs on this subject, he described minutely the disabilities under which the serfs labored, and drew up in detail a plan by which their feudal lords could be fairly compensated for the loss of their labor.

All Europe seemed then to be engaged in reforms, and all the leading minds appeared to be buoyant with hope. Howard was in full career in England. The Swiss were striving to adapt their laws to modern needs and tastes. Frederic of Prussia, Catherine II., Louis XVI., Gustavus of Sweden, Joseph of Austria, Jefferson and Madison in Virginia, all seemed intent on the same great business of liberalizing ancient law

[1] Indulgent philosopher, citizen minister, who sought the true only to do the good.

[2] One cannot fail of his salvation when he procures that of France.

and humanizing cruel usage. The sublime, the always urgent, the never-ending task of alleviating the lot of the sons of men seemed to be, at length, accepted by the rulers and owners of the earth as their natural and proper vocation. This was, more than ever before, the burden of Voltaire's correspondence with his monarchs. Frederic, who had thirty years before abolished torture, was now engaged in one of the refined details of adaptation, extremely difficult to touch without doing harm. He wished to lessen the temptation to destroy illegitimate children by lessening the shame of bearing them. He abolished, as he told Voltaire in 1777, the custom of admonishing the mothers in church; he removed the legal obstacles to their honorable marriage, and provided suitable asylums both for the mothers during confinement, and for their children afterwards. The king owned to Voltaire that, notwithstanding all these measures, he had not yet been able "to uproot the unnatural prejudice which induced such mothers to get rid of their offspring." If travelers in Germany are to be believed, time has accomplished there what Frederic found impossible.

From 1774, all eyes in Europe were frequently directed toward the great events that were occurring on the other side of the Atlantic. The Continental Congress met in September of that year at Philadelphia, "among my dear Quakers," as Voltaire remarked. He did not understand the controversy, at first, and thought his dear Quakers were false to their principles in raising troops to fight against the English Parliament. "The English," he wrote to Frederic, in March, 1776, "are tired of their felicity. I do not believe my dear Quakers will fight, but they will give money, and others will fight for them. I am no great politician; your majesty knows it well; but I doubt if the ministry at London is equal to ours. We were ruined; to-day the English are ruining themselves: to each his turn." When Voltaire wrote this letter, Turgot was still in place; when Frederic answered it, Turgot had been out of office a month. The king said he was not surprised at his dismissal, and added, "I represent to myself Louis XVI. as a young ewe surrounded by old wolves. He will be very fortunate if he escapes them." In the same letter, Frederic pours out all his scorn upon the Duke of Hesse for "selling his sub-

jects to the English as beasts are sold for the slaughter-house." He pitied "those poor Hessians, who will terminate as unhappily as *uselessly* their career in America."

Voltaire, too, as Duvernet intimates, shared the feeling of the King of Prussia upon this subject. The Duke of Brunswick visited Ferney just as the Hessian troops were embarking for America, and he happened to come upon the day celebrated every year at Ferney in honor of its lord, when the two companies of troops paraded in full uniform. "You have some very fine soldiers here," said the prince. Voltaire replied, with a certain manner well understood by the by-standers, "These are not soldiers; they are my friends. Yes, prince, a regiment of friends." He had become, in fact, a very good American, and lamented the reverses of the patriot army in the latter half of 1776. "You know," he wrote to D'Alembert in October, "that Dr. Franklin's troops have been beaten by those of the King of England. Alas! philosophers are beaten everywhere. Reason and liberty are ill-received in this world. No matter; courage, my very dear philosopher!" With Dr. Franklin he had been in friendly relations since 1767, when he sent him messages of good-will to London. He had a lively sense of the utility of lightning-rods as an incidental crusher of *l'Infâme*, as we see in the article "Tonnerre," of the Philosophical Dictionary.

CHAPTER XLI.

LAST LABORS AT FERNEY.

He was eighty-two years of age in 1776. His literary activity during the last four years of his life, as attested by the catalogue of his publications, exceeded that of any man of his age of whom we have record. It would be incredible, if the evidence of it were not visible and palpable in the shape of at least thirty works, from a four-page pamphlet to a commentary on the Bible in two volumes, from epigrams of one stanza to five-act tragedies in verse. Some of these had been written, or partly written, in previous years; but his vehemence seldom permitted him to keep a finished work long from the public, and nearly everything he wrote had an immediate and particular object, which delay would have frustrated. In his last three tragedies, "Don Pèdre," "Irène," and "Agathocles," there are traces of the author of "Mérope" and "Zaïre;" there are even entire scenes in his best manner; but neither of those dramas could have been successful on the stage apart from the interest felt by the public in the author. "Don Pèdre," upon which he labored longest and with the most fervor, which he also dedicated to D'Alembert in a long discourse, was never performed. It was not offered to the actors, but published as the work of a young man living in a remote province.

A curious proof both of his sleepless activity and of his loss of poetic power is mentioned by La Harpe, and confirmed by Wagnière. In 1777, the French Academy offered a prize for the best translation of the sixth book of the "Iliad." The poet of eighty-three years amused himself by competing, and sent his translation in the name of the Marquis de Villette. La Harpe, having learned the secret from the marquis himself, watched the effect of the piece upon the judges, of whom he was one. "It produced," he reports, "no sensation. Scarcely one fine verse was found in it, and it was hard to bear the

reading to the end. It would not even have obtained a mention, if I had not, in giving my opinion, represented to my colleagues that it was at least written very purely, a merit which the Academy ought always to encourage." The judges decided that none of the translations merited the prize, and gave to that of Voltaire only a mention as the fifth in point of excellence.[1]

But in his humorous poems, in his burlesque tales, whether in verse or prose, in his essays and reviews, in his verses of badinage, compliment, and epigram, there is the airy lightness of touch, the inexhaustible fertility in comic ideas, the unerring tact, and the triumphant point of the time when he penciled verses upon a card, at Berlin, for the sisters of the King of Prussia. Thus, on perceiving, in 1775, that Frederic had placed the word IMMORTALI at the bottom of the porcelain bust of himself, which the king sent him, he acknowledged the compliment in these lines: —

"Vous êtes généreux ; vos bontés souveraines
Me font de trop riches présents :
Vous me donnez dans mes vieux ans
Une terre dans vos domains." [2]

Some months after, in 1776, a young lady at his house wished he might live many years. He replied with this stanza: —

"Vous voulez arrêter mon âme fugitive.
Ah, madame, je le vois bien,
De tout ce qu'on possède on ne veut perdre rien ;
On veut que son esclave vive." [3]

About the same time he received from the publisher, Le Jay, a copy of La Beaumelle's pirate edition of "La Henriade," with offensive notes by the editor and by Fréron. Upon the cover the publisher had placed the portrait of Voltaire between those of his two enemies. He put the following epigram in circulation at Paris: —

"Le Jay vient de mettre Voltaire
Entre La Beaumelle et Fréron.
Ce serait vraiment un Calvaire,
S'il s'y trouvait un bon larron." [4]

[1] Correspondance de La Harpe, vol. ii. p. 273.

[2] You are generous; your sovereign bounty makes me too rich presents: in my old age you give me an estate in your domains.

[3] You wish to detain my fugitive soul. Ah, madame, I see plainly that we wish to lose nothing of all that we possess; we wish our slave to live.

[4] Le Jay has placed Voltaire between La Beaumelle and Fréron. Truly, this would be a Calvary, if there was in the picture a penitent thief.

It seemed to cost him no exertion to do such things. One day, in 1777, when all was in readiness for the rehearsal of a play at Ferney, Madame Denis kept the company waiting a long time, while she completed her toilet. He wrote these lines to relieve his impatience: —

> "Si par hasard, pour argent ou pour or,
> A vos boutons vous trouviez un remède,
> Peut-être vous seriez moins laide;
> Mais vous seriez bien laide encore."[1]

There are fifty trifles of this kind, long and short, which his editors assign to these last years. Of all his later writings for the public, those that had the swiftest and the widest currency were his burlesque tales; which remain to this day among his most popular works, though the circumstances that called them forth ceased to exist long ago. The tone of mind which issued in the revolutionary spirit can in no way be more easily or more agreeably ascertained than by a careful reading of these unique and inimitable productions. The reader of to-day will not overvalue them, for he does not suffer from the abuses and perversions which they assisted to destroy, and he has learned that of all effective writing burlesque is the least meritorious. It has its place and its use; there are evils which nothing else can make head against; there are solemn and imposing inanities that would crush civilization if they were not made ridiculous. Nevertheless, it was not a good sign of the times that, as he grew older, he should have been impelled and compelled to keep educated Europe on the grin with this wondrous series of burlesques.

It was, probably, the very great success of the "Man with Forty Crowns," published in 1768, that gave him the new impulse toward that form of composition. The "Man with Forty Crowns" became for a while as familiar a personage to the people of France as "Poor Richard" was for thirty years to the people of Pennsylvania. This tale is a burlesque, first, of the financial chaos which brought industrious and frugal France to bankruptcy fifteen years after the tale was written; and, secondly, of the economic nostrums that were proposed for the reduction of the chaos to order. It was a burlesque exhibi-

[1] If by chance, for silver or for gold, you should find a remedy for your pimples, you would perhaps be less ugly; but very ugly you would be still.

tion of that France which Turgot tried to save, and of that notion which he combated, so common to the impecunious sons of men, that there is a hocus-pocus science of finance that can make the books balance, though you continue to spend more than you receive. Malthus, Adam Smith, and Poor Richard may all have read this tale with advantage. When the heavy-laden Man of Forty Crowns a year ventures to ask the Geometer what would happen if the people of France should "take a fancy to have twice as many children" as they were then producing, the Geometer replies, "It would come to pass either that every one would have his income cut down one half, or that the land would have to produce double, or that there would be twice as many paupers, or that there would have to be twice as much gain by foreign commerce, or that half the people would have to go to America, or that one half the nation would eat the other half."

The scene which has in it most of satiric force is the fourth division of the tale, which admits the reader to the audience room of the minister of finance, on one of his public days. Nothing can be more comic or more blasting than this part of the story. It seems to be the very loading of the shell that blew the monarchy to pieces. The Man of Forty Crowns enters with his petition, and stands near the minister, awaiting his opportunity to present it. A monk, a fat tithe-owner, who had brought a suit against one of his fellow-citizens, whom he called *his peasants*, had the first hearing. Already this monk possessed more revenue than half of his parishioners put together, and he was lord of the fief besides. He claimed that his vassals, since they had with most arduous labor converted their thickets into vineyards, owed him the tenth part of their wine; a demand which amounted, reckoning the price of labor, poles, barrels, and cellarage, to more than a quarter of the product. "As the tenths," said he, "come to me of divine right, I ask for the quarter of my peasants' substance in the name of God." The minister blandly said to him, "I see how charitable you are!"

Next, a farmer-general, highly accomplished in his vocation, caught the minister's attention. "Monseigneur," said he, "that village can give nothing to this monk. As I made his parishioners pay during the past year thirty-two imposts

upon their wine, and as I afterwards fined them for drinking too much, they are entirely ruined. I have had their beasts and furniture sold, and they are still indebted to me. I oppose the demand of the reverend father." The minister replied, "You are right in claiming to be his rival. Both of you equally love your neighbor, and you both edify me."

Another monk sought a hearing, who, besides being rich in tithes, was *owner* of the peasants upon his estates, and to whom their property reverted at death. A cockney of Paris having by inadvertence lived a year and a day in one of the houses of this monk, and then died in it, the monk claimed the whole of the property of the inadvertent Parisian, and that by right divine. The minister felt that "the heart of this monk was as just and tender as that of the two others."

A fourth petitioner, the manager of the estate, now presented "a beautiful argument, by which he justified himself for having reduced twenty families to beggary." They had inherited property from their uncles, or aunts, or brothers, or cousins, and had paid the tax upon their inheritance. "The manager had generously proved to them that they had estimated their inheritances too low, that they were much richer than they believed; and having, in consequence, condemned them to pay a triple fine, having ruined them in expenses, and put in prison the fathers of families, he had bought their best possessions without untying his purse-strings. The minister said to him (in a tone a little bitter, in truth), 'Well done, good and faithful manager! Because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will constitute thee a farmer-general.' Nevertheless, he said aside to a master of requests, who stood beside him, "*We shall have to make these sacred and profane leeches disgorge! It is time to relieve the people, who, without our care and our justice, would never have anything to live upon, except in the other world.*'"

This tale, of a hundred and fifty pages, contains several passages of this nature, which contributed to make familiar to the minds of Frenchmen the venerable and complex inheritance of outrage which had come to them from barbaric times. The fault of the work, as of so much other effective literature, is that the author selects some instances for burlesque exhibition which were more exceptional than representative; but it was

salutary for Frenchmen to know what wrongs *could* be committed under the forms of ancient law, and in accordance with ancient usage.

It is not necessary, and indeed it is not possible, within reasonable compass, to describe the series of tales which amused and kindled France during the last years of Voltaire's life: such as the "Princess of Babylon," in 1768; the "History of Jenni, or the Atheist and the Sage," in 1769; "The Letters of Amabed," an Eastern tale, in 1769; "The White Bull," also an Oriental story, in 1773; and other shorter works, which are accessible in every cultivated language. The method of all of them is substantially the same; but perhaps the most ingenious and amusing romance of his later years is that of the "White Bull," which turns upon the adventures of Nebuchadnezzar during the seven years of his pasturage. Among the characters in this story are the Witch of Endor, the serpent that tempted Eve, Balaam's ass, the whale that swallowed Jonah, and the dove that flew from Noah's ark. As the method was the same, so the object of the tales was similar. One of them begins thus: "The thinking portion of the human race; that is, *the hundred thousandth part* of the human race." The common aim of all these ingenious stories is to increase the magnitude of that decimal fraction; to make *more* people use their minds, and not view the universe with the eyes of professional interpreters thereof.

Every father of a family in France could follow the reasoning of the Man with Forty Crowns, even when he discoursed of questions of political economy. That French Poor Richard married upon his forty crowns, and soon rejoiced in the possession of a fine boy, hoping to give in due time ten new subjects to the king. He was the best basket-maker in the world, and his wife an excellent seamstress. Near their modest cottage, the home of frugal industry, was a big abbey, with a hundred thousand francs of annual revenue. Why, asks the honest basket-maker, should that handful of monks "engulf" so enormous a portion of my forty crowns? Are they more useful to their country than I am? Do they contribute, as I do, to the population of the country? "No; not, at least, in appearance." Do they cultivate the land? Do they defend the state when it is attacked? No. Then what do they

do? They pray to God for us. "*Eh bien*, I will pray to God for them. *Let us share!*"

In 1770 the monks themselves could laugh at this as mere amusing paradox, and quote it as professors of political economy quote Paley's simile of the few fat pigeons, each with its huge heap of redundant corn, which great flocks of meagre birds eye with hungry despair. In 1792 the Jacobins were discussing these contrasts without laughter.

Of all the burlesques of Voltaire, the longest and the most laborious was one which appeared in 1776, entitled "The Bible at length Explained, by several Almoners of S. M. L. R. D. P." This work, which was in two volumes, of nearly three hundred pages each, began at once to attract notice from the police, as well as from the public. The mystical letters in the title-page were all easily explained except the last. The commenting Almoners were those of *Sa Majesté le Roi de Prusse ou de Pologne;* but which? The King of Prussia, it was remarked, had no almoners; and as to the King of Poland, if he had any, they were not known to the learned world. The reading public were not long in discerning the hand of Voltaire in this elaborate publication; which was not a burlesque of the Bible, but of the commentators of the same, those industrious scribes who minister to the new want of civilization, — that of possessing rows of tall, thick, and strongly bound volumes which are never taken from their shelves. In this work the author gathered the absurdities into which men have fallen, in their impious attempt to degrade venerable legend and poetic myth into vulgar and impossible history. He showed the startling points of resemblance between the legendary prodigies of the Bible and those of other and older religions. He burlesqued throughout the grave manner of the professional commentator, and discussed the trivialities of interpretation in a tone that must have amused theologians when they read the work by themselves. It is edifying to note the pains he takes to refute the enemies of the faith, and how respectfully he quotes and considers previous commentators. If he gives at some length and with great force the objections of Collins, Shaftesbury, and Bayle, he does so, of course, only "to confute them;" and when human reason essays in vain to reconcile the irreconcilable he

humbly submits to the voice of the church, which has come to the aid of imperfect reason, and kindly declares that to be true which is obviously false. After reviewing the books of the New Testament, he comes at last to the question, What are we to believe concerning them? In answering this he drops the bantering manner of the previous pages, and speaks seriously, thus: —

"We know not who were the authors of these books, nor at what times they were written. We know only that they contradict one another, and that, taken as a whole, they contradict feeble human reason, the only light God gives us to judge by.

"It seems to us probable merely that Jesus having gained some adherents, having always insulted the Pharisees and the priests, and having succumbed to his enemies, who caused him to be crucified, his adherents avenged themselves by crying everywhere that God had raised him from the dead. Immediately after they separated themselves entirely from the Jewish sect. It was no longer a schism; it was a new sect, which combated all the others. They had all the obstinacy of Jews and all the enthusiasm of innovators. They spread themselves throughout the Roman empire, in which every religion was well received by a hundred different races. Christianity established itself at first among the poor. It was an association founded upon the primitive equality of men, and upon the disapproval of the Essenes and Therapeutæ, who were imitated by the first partisans of Jesus.

"But the more this society extended itself, the more it degenerated. Nature resumed her rights. The Christians, being excluded from the dignities of the empire, devoted themselves to commerce, as dissenters now do in all the countries of Europe. They acquired wealth; they lent money to the father of Constantine. The rest is known. Their fatal quarrels for metaphysical chimeras disturbed for a long time all the Roman empire. At length, this religion, driven from the East, where it was born, found refuge in the West, which it inundated with its own blood and the blood of the nations. To its principal pontiffs remain still the grace of heaven and the fatness of the earth. May they always enjoy them in peace! May they have pity upon the miserable! May they never make any miserable! And may the founder of this private sect, now become a dominant religion, — that Jewish founder, who was born poor and died poor, — not be always able to say, 'My daughter, how little you resemble your father!'"

This peculiar commentary, Wagnière informs us, was intended to be on a more extensive scale; but, at eighty-two, it

behooves an author to take short flights, and so the work was brought to a conclusion in 1776. Next year, however, he expanded the concluding passage to the proportions he had originally intended, and published it separately as a "History of the Establishment of Christianity," a work as large as one of the volumes of the Commentary. Both these publications seemed to the polite circles of Paris superfluous. "Unfortunately," wrote one diarist, on chronicling the appearance of the Commentary, "the subject is exhausted; the cause is decided for those who are willing to avail themselves of their reason and their lights, and other people will no more read this Commentary than they do the ordinary kind." [1]

If the subject was exhausted, the author was not; he seemed inexhaustible. Soon after the Commentary was off his hands, a letter came to him from M. de Cromot, steward of the household of "Monsieur" the brother of Louis XVI., who afterwards reigned as Louis XVIII. Monsieur, in fifteen days, would give a *fête* to the queen, then in the first resplendency of her reign, the lovely creature whom Burke described in his "Reflections upon the French Revolution." Voltaire had already celebrated her charms in more than one poem, and now M. de Cromot desired his aid for the *fête* in her honor. He replied, "In giving me the most agreeable commission with which I could be honored, you forgot one little bagatelle, which is that I am past eighty-two. You are like the God of the Jansenists, who gives commandments impossible to execute; and, the better to resemble that God, you do not fail to notify me that I have but fifteen days to prepare myself; so that the queen will have supped before I can get an answer to my letter." As it was impossible in the time to write a divertisement in form, he sent a sketch of a *fête* given at Vienna by the Austrian court sixty years before, called the "Host and Hostess."

"The emperor," he explained, "was the Host, and the empress was the Hostess; they received all the travelers who came to sup and sleep at their inn, and gave a good repast at the *table d'hôte*. All the travelers were dressed in the ancient manner of their country, and every one did his best in the way of respectfully cajoling the Hostess. The travelers

[1] Mémoires de Bachaument. July 26, 1776.

could have adventures; some could make verses for the queen; others would sing Italian airs; there could be quarrels, missed rendezvous, and jests of all kinds. Each actor could invent his part, and shorten or prolong it at pleasure."

In three or four days he sent his outline, with songs, repartees, some dialogue, suggestions of scenes, characters, and effects. M. de Cromot seized the idea with avidity, and carried it out with taste and spirit. One scene, in which a Bohemian fortune-teller examines the hands of the Host and Hostess, as well as those of Monsieur and Madame, and sings their fortunes in verse, the aged poet wrote out in some detail. The *fête* was much admired. If the king did not shine as Host, the queen made amends as Hostess, since a fine lady never looks so well as in a peasant's costume; and Marie Antoinette had wit enough to repeat the jests made for her.

The veteran dramatist, in the same year, 1776, while still laboring upon his last tragedies, "Irène" and "Agathocles," was deeply stirred by Pierre le Tourneur's "Essay upon Shakespeare," prefixed to his translation of Shakespeare's works. Voltaire had discovered Shakespeare; but only as Columbus discovered America, without knowing what he had found. Pierre le Tourneur was the Frenchman who discerned the continental vastness and inexhaustible value of Voltaire's discovery. He found Shakespeare to be "the sovereign genius of the stage." His translation, in which he had the assistance of eminent scholars, ran to twenty volumes, and it remained, until recent times, with all its defects, the best source of information concerning the greatest of poets accessible to French readers. The success of the translation was a result of that fashionable taste for everything English which prevailed in France until the American war turned the currents of feeling another way. Voltaire had originated that taste. His countrymen had taken him at his word; and now, in his old age, he saw his beloved Racine, his august Corneille, his universal Molière, and himself pushed rudely from their pedestals, and "a gifted barbarian" exalted in their stead, as the one master of the dramatic art.

"Have you read the two volumes of this wretch," he asks D'Argental, "in which he calls Shakespeare the *god of the stage?* He sacrifices all the French without exception to his idol, as pigs were formerly sacrificed to Ceres!"

And Le Tourneur had found the secret of getting the king, the queen, and all the royal family to subscribe for his work! "The blood boils in my old veins," he continued; and, what was frightful to think of, it was himself who had first shown to Frenchmen "the few pearls to be found in that dunghill"! "Little did I foresee that I should serve one day to crush under foot the crowns of Corneille and Racine, in order to adorn with one the brows of a barbarian actor." Under the influence of these feelings, which were shared by D'Argental and all the Voltairean circle in Paris, he wrote a Letter upon Shakespeare to the French Academy, which was read at the session of August 25, 1776. This letter may be pronounced the most blind and perverse criticism ever written by a man of ability. It is worse than Hume's; it is as bad as George III.'s, when he remarked to Fanny Burney that "most of Shakespeare was sad stuff, only one must not say so." In descanting upon "Othello," he says nothing of the wondrous third act, nothing of the sublime fifth, nothing of Desdemona, but translates a portion of the conversation between Brabantio and Iago under the windows of the senator. That conversation is, in its place, and for its purpose, as good as the finest touches of the play; but the reader can easily imagine the effect of the passage as presented by Voltaire to readers accustomed from youth up to the restraints and severities of French tragedy, the heroes of which do not even say, Good-morning, or Farewell.

The error of M. le Tourneur was in sacrificing "the pigs to Ceres." If Shakespeare was right, it does not follow that Racine was wrong. If Shakespeare was the supreme dramatist of all ages, it does not follow that Racine, Corneille, Molière, and Voltaire were not dramatists, to whom was due the grateful homage of their countrymen. It is, nevertheless, much to be regretted that "old men will still be talking," when they say such things as Voltaire said in his letters upon Le Tourneur's Shakespeare. He ends his last epistle to the Academy with a remark upon the quarrel between Thersites and *le bâtard de Priam*, in "Troilus and Cressida." Imagine, gentlemen, "Louis XIV. in his gallery at Versailles, surrounded by his brilliant court. A buffoon [*un Gilles*], covered with patches, pierces the crowd of heroes, of great men, and of beauties who compose that court. He proposes that they shall

abandon Corneille, Racine, and Molière for a mountebank who has some happy sallies and makes contortions! How do you think this offer would have been received?"

The force of perversity can no further go. But, I repeat, very much in the same way the polite classes of England judged Shakespeare for a hundred and fifty years. It was the pit that appreciated him, — the great pit of mighty London, the beloved pit of Hogarth and Lamb: a severe and just judge, bountiful in applause, ruthless in condemnation.

Voltaire, we may hope, was speedily consoled. In the midst of this controversy, which he called his "war with England," a wandering manager fixed his eyes upon a large store-house at Ferney, and induced the lord of that "*drôle* of a half-built city" to fit it up as a theatre. This manager engaged Lekain, Voltaire himself soliciting the actor's leave of absence from the Théâtre-Français; a favor which kings could not always procure. All succeeded beyond hope. The great tragedian played a round of his leading parts with all the fire and feeling of his best Paris nights. "The thirteen cantons have crowded to see him, and have been ravished." Twice the aged poet was unable to attend; which, he said, was enough of itself to prove that he was half dead. He nevertheless pushed on his "war" with sleepless energy, and enlisted D'Alembert, Diderot, Marmontel, and La Harpe in the service. He hoped to gain the young queen to his side, "since she had deigned to renounce Lekain a month in his favor." And while Lekain was still thrilling the thirteen cantons with his rendering of the masterpieces of the French drama came the Marquis de Villevieille, post-haste, from the French Academy to Ferney, to tell the patriarch of literature that his Letter had made a triumphant hit at the public reading of it by D'Alembert, the perpetual secretary of the Academy.

"The marquis," wrote D'Alembert, "proposes to burst some post-horses in order to have the pleasure of being the first to give you an account of your success. . It was all that you could desire. Your reflections gave very great pleasure, and were much applauded. The citations from Shakespeare greatly diverted the assembly. They made me repeat several passages, and people of taste listened to the closing portion with particular interest. I need not say that the English who were pres-

ent went away very much discontented, and even some Frenchmen, who, not satisfied with having been beaten on land and sea, would like us to be beaten on the stage also. They resemble the wife of the Médecin Malgré Lui, who said, 'I wish to be beaten, I.' I read you with all the warmth of friendship and all the zeal which the good cause inspires, to which I add even the interest of my little vanity; for I had it much at heart not to see the cannon miss fire which I had undertaken to touch off. I regretted the little omissions which had to be made, in order not to scandalize too much the devotees and the ladies; but the passages which I could venture to read caused great merriment, and contributed much, I hope, to the completeness of the victory."

It required no little firmness on the part of Le Tourneur and his colleagues to go on with their bold and generous enterprise; and it was not till 1782 that the twentieth and last volume of the translation appeared. To this day, indeed, Shakespeare is no more domesticated in France than Racine is with us: the difference of language and form being obstacles that defy removal, even if there were no other hindrances. For one of us to be able to read Racine with French eyes and ears is to be a reader of French picked out of ten thousand. It is all but impossible. To this day, Molière is the only dramatist of France whom many English-speaking readers can enjoy as though he were one of ourselves. He alone is not a foreigner to us.

Voltaire continued his habit of reading and reviewing English books to the last year of his life. Chesterfield's "Letters to his Son" he inclined, upon the first reading, in 1774, to regard as "the best book upon education ever written," and the author of it as "the only Englishman who ever recommended the art of pleasing as the first duty of life." He reviewed Tristram Shandy at some length in 1777, with imperfect appreciation of its merits; not forgetting to mention that the French sense of decency compelled the translator to omit the "form of excommunication used in the church of Rochester!" He was of opinion that the translation of Tristram Shandy would no more be finished than that of Shakespeare. Among other late reviews, there is a long one of a treatise, in three volumes, upon Man, by J. P. Marat, doctor of medicine, not yet styled

Friend of the People; but Charlotte Corday, nine years of age, was already brooding over Rousseau, whom Marat also extolled with passion in his preposterous work. The Marquis de Chastellux's volumes upon "La Félicité Publique" were also reviewed by Voltaire in 1777, with warm commendation. The author of this work, he said, was not a system-maker who wished to dazzle, nor a charlatan who had his drug to sell, but a well-instructed gentleman who wrote with candor; "he is Montaigne with method." It seems from these reviews as if he wished, now that his own hand was losing its power, to influence the public mind by telling it what to read; for these notices are written with so much journalistic tact that each of them must, for the moment, have made or marred the reputation of a book.

Nor was it works of literature alone that interested him. He was still a farmer; he loved still his cattle, his birds, his bees, his very old horses, and his sheep. Claude Bourgelat, of Lyons, who may justly be called the creator of the veterinary art in France, was now experimenting in the treatment of the diseases of cattle. He published his large work upon the contagious diseases of cattle in 1775, and sent a copy to the farmer of the land of Gex. Voltaire recognized all the merit and dignity of such studies. He wrote to M. Bourgelat, in the course of a long letter, —

"The animals, our *confrères*, deserve at our hands a little more care than they receive, especially since the Lord made a compact with them immediately after the deluge. We treat them, despite that compact, with almost as much inhumanity as the Russians, the Poles, and the monks of Franche-Comté treat their peasants, and as the custom-house clerks treat those who go and buy a handful of salt somewhere else. There is at the present moment a contagious malady in Savoy, a league from my house. My preservative is to have no communication with the infected; to keep my cattle extremely clean in vast stables, well ventilated, and to give them wholesome food. . . . . The greatest misfortune of the peasants is to be imbecile, and another misfortune is to be too much neglected. They are never thought of except when the plague devastates them and their flocks; but, provided there are pretty opera-girls at Paris, all goes well."

In various ways, he conceded something to his fourscore years. He learned how to grow old. His hours of getting up

and going to bed became more regular. He went to bed about ten, and usually slept until five in the morning. Barbara, his housekeeper, whom he used to call *bonne-Baba*, would then come into his room and bring in his breakfast, which was ordinarily coffee and cream. "Another day, my bonne-Baba," he would say, when she appeared. "To-morrow, perhaps, you will be no longer troubled about me. When I shall be out yonder, asleep in my tomb, there will be no more bother of getting my breakfast, nor fear of being scolded." One day, Duvernet adds, after she had brought him his coffee and gone out again, he took it into his head to perfume the coffee from a bottle of rose-water at his side. This mixture immediately produced nausea and palpitation. He rang violently, and Baba, terrified, ran to him as fast as she could. "What is the matter, then, monsieur?" she cried, on entering. "My good Baba," said he, "I am in the agonies of death. I put some rose-water into my coffee, and it is killing me." She replied, "Oh, monsieur, with all your *esprit*, you are sillier than your own turkeys." "I know it well, good Baba," he replied; "but you, who are a woman of good sense, hinder me from dying!" He was speedily relieved, and the story remained one of the numerous jests of the château.

The reader may care to know precisely what he thought upon a question which, at one period or another, interests every thinking creature: "If a man die, shall he live again?" In one of these later years, Frederic-William, Prince Royal of Prussia, nephew and heir presumptive of Frederic, wrote to ask him if he thought the "soul" ceased to exist at death. Voltaire thus replied: —

"Monseigneur, — The royal family of Prussia has great reason not to be willing that its soul should be annihilated; it has more right than any to immortality.

"It is true that we do not know too well what a soul is; we have never seen one. All that we know is that the Master Eternal of nature has given us the faculty of thinking, and of knowing virtue. It is not demonstrated that this faculty lives after our death; but the contrary is not demonstrated, any more. It can be, doubtless, that God has accorded thought to a monad, which he will make to think after us; nothing is contradictory in this idea.

"In the midst of all the doubts which men have turned, during four

thousand years, in four thousand ways, the surest course is never to do anything against our conscience. With this secret, we enjoy life, and we fear nothing in death.

"It is only charlatans who are certain. We know nothing of first principles. It is truly extravagant to define God, angels, minds, and to know precisely why God formed the world, when we do not know why we move our arms at will.

"Doubt is not a very agreeable state of mind, but certainty is a ridiculous state.

"What revolts us most in the work upon the 'System of Nature' (after the method of making eels with flour) is the audacity with which the author decides that there is no God, without so much as trying to prove the impossibility. There is some eloquence in this book, but much more declamation, and no proof. The work is pernicious for princes and for peoples: —

Si Dieu n'existait pas, il faudrait l'inventer.[1]

"But all nature cries to us that he exists, that there is a Supreme Intelligence, a power immense, an order admirable, and all teaches us our dependence.

"In our profound ignorance, let us do our best; this is what I think, and what I have always thought, amidst all the miseries and all the follies incident to seventy-seven years of life.

"Your Royal Highness has before you the most beautiful career. I wish you may enjoy it, and I dare predict for you a happiness worthy of you and of your sentiments. I saw you as a child, monseigneur; I came into your chamber when you had the small-pox; I trembled for your life. Monseigneur, your father honored me with his favorable regards; you deign to bestow upon me the same favor. It is the honor of my old age, and a consolation for the ills under which it is ready to succumb. I am, with profound respect, monseigneur," etc.

The reader will observe that this letter is a perfect specimen of his epistolary method. The conventionalities are gracefully and fully complied with, but nothing is sacrificed to them. The first and last paragraphs are for the prince; but in all the rest it is an old man addressing a young man with simple sincerity. From the general tone of his correspondence and conversation, it is probable that he had no very confident expectation of surviving death, even if he had any at all. One thing appertaining to death he still dreaded, and one only: the shadow of the priest at his bedside, armed with the trivial

[1] If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him.

and deadly implements of his trade. If, at the last hour, he made no concession to the church, he would give it the triumph of excluding his remains from decent burial; if he made the smallest concession, it would be used against the great object of his laborious life, — it would be exaggerated and misunderstood. Foreseeing this dilemma, he had deliberately provided the means of avoiding it: first, by becoming the lord of Ferney, which gave him a certain ascendency over the curé of the parish; secondly, by making Madame Denis his heir to the seigneury; thirdly, by building a tomb for his body close to the church, "neither in it nor out of it," as he remarked; fourthly, by pensioning the curé. But in his later years he deemed these precautions insufficient. On this subject Wagnière favors us with a curious note: —

"While he was at Ferney he always said to me, '*If, when I shall be sick, some priest presents himself, be sure to show him out.*' And to avoid those ceremonies which serve only to terrify the enfeebled imaginations of sick people, and often to hasten their death, I had hired, in my own name, for him and by his order, a house in Switzerland, four leagues from Ferney, to which he wished to be conveyed, in order to finish his days tranquilly, as soon as he should feel himself to be in danger. He also charged me expressly to have his remains transported thence to Ferney, to be there interred in his bath-house, although he had formerly built a tomb adjoining Ferney church." [1]

These various measures seemed adequate to the case of a lord of Ferney, dying either in his own château, or in Protestant Switzerland. But he was in the land of the living, and apparently capable of remaining in it ten years longer. In 1777, he was still an active, vigilant, and successful man of business, with ships in the Indian seas, with a Duke of Würtemberg paying up his large arrears of interest, with a "city" of Ferney increasing in size and wealth, with a revenue of two hundred and six thousand francs, with farms, flocks, horses, silk-worms, and bees, all managed with ease and efficiency by an hour's attention to them every day. Considering the whole environment of the man, he had none too much money, and took no undue care of his estate. In his unique circumstances

[1] 1 Longchamp et Wagnière, 161.

he was lost without money, and even without much money. Money was as essential to him as to any other potentate carrying on war, — as essential as those "barrels" of coin which Frederic inherited from his father. He took his losses with the gayety that becomes a man who knows how to replace them. He wrote in January, 1777, to the Marquis de Florian: —

"The Sieur Bérard, captain of our ship Hercules, whom we sent to India, and who returned to Lorient, has gone off with our money, without saying good-by to any one, and has sailed for Bengal instead of paying us. But there is no way of sending a policeman after him upon the high seas, as in the 'Fourberies de Scapin.' They say the scoundrel will account with us in five years at the latest, and that we shall not lose, through this mariner of Normandy, more than about ninety per cent."

There may be seen among the manuscripts of the National Library at Paris a little blank-book of forty-eight leaves, like those which Paris housekeepers still buy for five sous in which to keep the account of their marketing. This book, for which France paid five hundred francs in 1847, was the last account-book used by Voltaire, and contains, among other things, a list of the principal sources of his revenue in the last years of his life. From this catalogue we discover that the Duke of Richelieu, in 1775, was still paying him that annuity of four thousand francs, in which the poet had prudently invested some of his first capital fifty years before. The city of Paris paid him 14,023 francs per annum upon money lent long ago. He drew in 1775 from the India Company of France 11,568 francs a year. Other pleasing items, thirteen in number, swelled the total of his Paris revenues to 78,481 francs. This income the late King of France could have conveniently confiscated, and would have done so if he had not been more governed by his mistresses than by his priests. Voltaire drew besides 62,500 francs a year from the Duke of Würtemberg, 13,000 from the Elector-Palatine, 15,000 from Ferney, and from all these external sources together 106,000 francs. After deducting taxes and costs of collection, his revenue in 1775 amounted to 184,481 francs, and in 1777 to 206,000 francs; about equal, in purchasing power, to the same number of our dollars of 1881.

In the same little yellow book he sums up his probable ex-

penditures in 1775, thus: "Upon which it is necessary to pay, to my nephews, 3,600 francs; for the year's expenses, 40,000; to the curé, 800; in alms, 1,000, — total, 45,400." The book contains also a large number of notes and entries, some of which convey little information to a reader of to-day, though all are written in the clear, small, legible hand of the master. This entry arrests the eye: "Bartered with the girl Wagnière, August, 1777, 109 pounds soap, 155 pounds broken sugar, and 44 pounds oil, for which she paid me in money and loaf sugar."

We observe with pleasure, in the long list of his tenants, the names of some of those "natives" of Geneva who incurred the hostility of the bourgeois and councilors during the troubles ending in the "massacre" of 1770 and their flight to Ferney. Auzière, for one, was paying rapidly for his house, — seven hundred francs at a time. With regard to their Mightinesses of the little republic, he appears to have adopted at length the line of silent feud. They sent him a notice, claiming some trifle of annual charge, in lieu of feudal homage, for a field of his in their domain. He wrote to Florian, "I will certainly make them eat all the hay of that meadow before I pay them an homage-fee for it."

On New Year's day, 1778, when he was past eighty-three, he was a well-preserved and amazingly vigorous old man, a prolific author, the centre of active interests, the animating soul of a numerous and growing community that needed him every day. Doubtless he could have lived to be ninety, a beneficial existence to all who were related to him, if he could but have continued his regular and orderly life at his own house in the country.

CHAPTER XLII.

TO PARIS WITH A NEW PLAY.

A GLEAM of sunshine had fallen upon his path in 1776, which illumined all the rest of his days. In the absence of Marie Corneille and her family, who still chiefly lived at Paris, Madame Denis felt the need of a companion; particularly during the long Alpine winter, when visitors were few. Among their neighbors in the land of Gex was an officer of the king's guard, Rouph de Varicourt, of the ancient nobility of Burgundy, whose rank in the army was equivalent to lieutenant-colonel of cavalry; upon the pay of which he maintained a hungry family of eleven children. The *régime* of the period was convenient for such noble families, as the children whom the king could not provide for found refuge in the church. Voltaire had already besought a benefice for one of the "big boys" of this family, a priest twenty years of age, whom he described as being "one of the handsomest priests in the kingdom, and one of the poorest." We may presume that his application was successful, since this *grand garçon* died, in 1822, Bishop of Orleans. Moreover, it was to a woman of fashion, Madame de Villette, that he entrusted the interests of the young priest.

One of the priest's sisters, Reine-Philiberte de Varicourt, a lovely and amiable girl of sixteen, was destined by her family to an early tomb in a convent. Her occasional visits to Ferney with her parents did not tend to reconcile "the nun," as she was already styled, to her approaching doom; nor did it reconcile the inmates of Ferney to losing forever the charm of her society. Madame Denis became warmly attached to her; Voltaire not less so; and in the winter of 1775–76, they adopted her as a member of their family, and she came to live at the château. She was then eighteen years of age. Freed from the restrictions and anxieties of her old home, she adapted her-

self at once to her new circumstances, and became the life and ornament of the house. Its master, who gave every one about him a name, called her Belle-et-Bonne. She made herself the solace and charm of his existence, enlivening every day, adorning every festival, greeting him with caresses in the morning, and giving brilliancy and gladness to the evening. At the *fête* of St. Francis, celebrated every year at Ferney by the whole colony with great enthusiasm, she shone with engaging lustre, walking in the procession adorned with flowers, and carrying in her hand a basket containing her two pet doves with white wings and rosy beaks, smiling and blushing as she passed.

She loved to wait upon him. He had contrived a hanging-desk over his bed, which he could lower and raise at pleasure, upon which were placed all the means of continuing his work at any hour of day or night. It was her hand that put this apparatus in order at night, and arranged his bed as he liked to have it. She took charge of the minor needs and habits of the old man; while he, on his part, loved to give her lessons in dancing, and to show her how the great ladies of the court paid their homage to the king and queen. On his table he always kept a box with money in it for the poor, and now this store was given in charge to Belle-et-Bonne. "She is," he would say, using a convent expression, "my *sœur du pot*," and she carried the purse of the poor *ex officio*. It was remarked by the household that, in her presence, he was never in ill-humor, and that, in the midst of his demonstrative and harmless anger, if she appeared upon the scene, the tempest was instantly stilled. "You put me on good terms with myself," he would say to her. "I cannot be angry before you." When she entered in the morning, he would say sometimes, "Good-morning, *belle nature!*" as he kissed her forehead. She, apt to catch the humor of the place, would reply, as she kissed his cheeks, "Good-morning, *mon dieu tutélaire!*" He wondered how she could be willing to place her smooth young face against his death's head, and when she repeated the application he would say it was Life and Death embracing.[1] Not the least of her triumphs was that she could be all this to the uncle and retain the lively affection of the niece.

[1] Duvernet, page 435. Paris, 1797.

In the summer of 1777, when Belle-et-Bonne had lived a year and a half at Ferney, arrived, unannounced, from Paris, the Marquis de Villette, a *roué* of that metropolis, aged forty-one, with a revenue of a hundred and twenty thousand francs a year, and a reputation which required not less. He was the son of that Madame de Villette, a frequent visitor at Ferney, whom Voltaire called his butterfly philosopher, and who served him in various ways at Paris. The son, also, had been at Ferney several times, and was a favorite there; for, as Voltaire said of him, he had the amusing talents in such a degree of perfection that he could have cheered the very Calvinists of Geneva. He could sing, play, relate, act, imitate, personate, and compose verses. And now, at the mature age of forty-one, he had run away from a woman and a duel in Paris, *blasé* and discredited, to bestow himself upon Ferney until his affair had blown over. He, too, like so many other gifted young men, on both sides of the Channel, was a victim of *l'Infâme;* since virtue's own sacred self had lost caste through the unworthiness of those who had her in charge. It was fashionable, not odious, to be dissolute, and this young man had followed the fashion.

He saw the new inmate of Ferney on that day of festivity, when she walked garlanded, carrying her white doves. He fell in love with her, and proposed. His hundred and twenty thousand francs per annum were supposed then to be an equivalent to her virtue and youthful loveliness; and there seems to have been no thought to the contrary except in Voltaire's mind. The lover himself, as Wagnière indignantly relates, played fast and loose for three months; but, at length, in the autumn of 1777, at midnight, in Ferney church, the marriage took place. Voltaire, though never married himself, was addicted to match-making, and used to boast that twenty-two marriages had occurred on his estate since his settlement upon the shores of Lake Leman.

"Our Ferney cottage," he wrote to D'Argental, November 5, 1777, "was not made to keep maidens in. We have mated three: Mademoiselle Corneille, her sister-in-law, Mademoiselle Dupuits, and Mademoiselle de Varicourt, whom M. de Villette takes from us. She has not a farthing, and her husband makes a good bargain. He marries innocence, virtue,

prudence, taste for everything that is good, an unalterable serenity of mind, united with sensibility; the whole adorned with the lustre of youth and beauty."

During the marriage festivities, as well as during the honeymoon, which was spent at Ferney, Voltaire was intent on finishing for the Théâtre-Français his tragedy of "Irène," a work which he retouched, revised, and corrected with all the pains of young ambition. He read it to his new "son-in-law;" he wrote endless letters about it to his guardian angel; he talked it over at dinner. At the last moment, at a suggestion of Villette's, he changed the name of one of his characters from Basile to Léonce, because there was a comic Basile in Beaumarchais's new comedy of the "Barber of Seville," and the coincidence might elicit a ruinous jest from the parquette. "For my part," he wrote at this time, "I try to correct both myself and my works at an age when a man is supposed to be incapable of everything. I believe nothing of that. If at the age of a hundred years I had committed a fault, I should wish to repair it at a hundred and one." He sent a copy of his play to D'Argental in November, and hoped to show the people of Paris that he who had thrilled them with delight when the Duke of Orleans was regent was still capable of giving them pleasure, after the lapse of nearly sixty years. "Be sure," he wrote to D'Argental, "that I have labored upon this work, and am still laboring upon it, only to have an occasion to go to Paris to enjoy, after thirty years of absence, your goodness in always having loved me. That is the veritable *dénoûment* of the piece." To the end of January, 1778, he continued to revise and alter the play with a zeal that never can be other than admirable when excellence in a work of art is the object. It may be, too, that the extraordinary success of Beaumarchais's comedy had revived his taste for the most intoxicating form of literary glory.

The scene of the new tragedy was the ancient palace of Constantine at Constantinople, and the time was in that turbulent period, from the seventh to the ninth century, when a conspiracy of the palace could give in a day another master to that part of the world. Irène, unwillingly the wife of the reigning emperor, Nicephore, loved Prince Alexis, who returned from brilliant foreign conquest to rise upon the emperor, kill

him, and assume his throne. Horror-stricken, she would not marry the blood-stained hero whom she loved; her father, the pontiff of the country, supporting her in her virtuous resolution, and providing her an asylum. After five acts of agony and internal conflict, she ends the struggle by suicide. There are in this play several effective "points" and passages; there are lines and couplets which the author might have written in his prime; but, taken as a whole, it has a faded-daguerreotype effect, and we can fancy a manager, to whom it should have been sent anonymously, saying, "Very good indeed; let the young man persevere, but avoid imitating Voltaire."

And so the winter closed in upon the family at Ferney; the married pair being settled in the château for the holiday season, although possessing at Paris a spacious hotel, all ready for occupancy. They conversed much of Paris, of the new tragedy, of the distribution of parts, of Lekain's objecting to the character assigned him, of the rehearsals, and how inconvenient it was to produce a play in the author's absence. "We form projects," he wrote, November 26th, "with Madame Denis, with M. and Madame de Villette; we arrange those projects at noon, and we discover all the impossibilities of carrying them out at two o'clock." The whole household were impatient to set out for the metropolis except the master, who wished it and wished it not, wished it at night and dreaded it in the morning. "Don't you know," he would say, "that there are in that city forty thousand fanatics, who, while blessing Heaven, would carry forty thousand fagots to make a fire to burn me? That would be *my* bed of honor." To which one replied, "But don't you know that you have at Paris eighty thousand friends, who, all running to extinguish the fire, would, if it would amuse you, drown the fagot carriers?"

He was still reluctant. According to the faithful Wagnière, they began to assure him that the queen, the Count d'Artois, the whole court, and even the king had the greatest desire to see him; which might have been true in that year of delusion, 1778, when this absolute court was openly committed to the American cause. Lekain, too, being in full quarrel with the chief director of the theatre, made another argument for his going, and they all dwelt much on the danger of failure if the author did not personally direct the rehearsals. They urged

that it belonged to his glory to set right three quarters of Europe, who supposed that he was not permitted to return to the city in which he was born. He consented at last to make the journey, and to stay in Paris long enough to superintend the production of his tragedy.

"It was agreed [says Wagnière] that his niece, with M. and Madame de Villette, should set out first, that all of them should lodge at M. de Villette's house, and that M. de Voltaire should remain at Paris six weeks only. They started on the 3d of February, 1778, and M. de Voltaire, with myself, on the 5th, at noon, with no other servant but his cook. Ferney was in grief and consternation when M. de Voltaire left it. All the colonists were weeping, and seemed to foresee misfortune. He himself was moved to tears. He promised them that in a month and a half, without fail, he would return to the midst of his children. It is so certain that such was his intention that he did not arrange his affairs at all, and did not put away either the papers relating to his estate, or those relating to literature.

"We meant to sleep at Nantua. Having reached Bourg, in Brescia, while they were changing horses, he was recognized, and in a moment the whole village gathered around the carriage; and M. de Voltaire, in order to be alone, was obliged to lock himself up in a room on the first floor of the house.

"The master of the post-house, seeing that the postilion had harnessed a poor horse, made him put in a better one, and said to him, with a rude oath, 'Drive fast; burst my horses; I don't care for them. You are carrying M. de Voltaire.' These words pleased the spectators, and we set out in the midst of their laughter and cheers. M. de Voltaire himself could not help laughing, although he saw himself at once deprived of the incognito which he had meant to keep during the whole journey.

"We passed the second night at Senecey, and the third at Dijon, where, as soon as he arrived, M. de Voltaire went to see some lawyers and the manager of the suit which he sustained on behalf of Madame Denis. Several persons of the first distinction came to visit him; others gave money to the inn servants to leave the door of his room open. Some even wished to dress themselves like waiters, in order to wait upon him at supper, and by this stratagem to get a sight of him.

"The next day we were going to sleep at Joigny, and expected to arrive on the following day at Paris; but the spring of the carriage broke a league and a half from Moret. A postilion was sent forward to Moret, who found M. de Villette just arrived there. He came back

immediately to take us into his carriage, after which he set out again with his company.

"At length, on the 10th of February, about half past three in the afternoon, we reached Paris. At the gate the clerks asked us if we had anything with us contrary to the king's orders. 'By my faith, gentlemen,' replied M. de Voltaire, 'I believe there is nothing here contraband except myself.' I alighted from the carriage, to enable the official to make his examination more easily. One of the guards said to his comrade, 'This is, *pardieu!* M. de Voltaire.' He pulled by his coat the clerk who was searching, and repeated to him the same thing, fixing his eyes upon *me!* I could not help laughing. Then all of them, looking at M. de Voltaire with the greatest astonishment mingled with respect, begged him to continue his journey.

"He had enjoyed all the way the best health. I never saw him in a more agreeable humor; his gayety was delightful. His great pleasure was to try to make me drunk, saying that, since I had never taken too much wine, it would perhaps be very pleasant to do so once. He slept in his carriage, which was arranged for reclining. Sometime she read; at other times it was my turn to read; now he amused himself by arguing with me, now in telling me stories fit to make one die laughing.

"Immediately after alighting at the hotel of M. de Villette, he went on foot to the house (near by) of the Count d'Argental, his old friend, who was not at home, and he retured to M. de Villette's. M. d'Argental arrived a moment after, who saw M. de Voltaire as he was entering the suite of rooms which had been prepared for him. The count ran to him, and, after the first embraces, told him that Lekain was just buried! At this news M. de Voltaire uttered a terrible cry."

He had traveled three hundred miles to find the great actor dead, upon whom he chiefly relied for the success of his play! To Lekain he had assigned the part of Léonce, the pontiff of Constantinople, and the father of his heroine. Nothing daunted, he read the corrected version of his tragedy that very evening to D'Argental, who was himself an old man then, approaching his seventy-ninth year. Belle-et-Bonne used to relate, fifty years after, how the two aged zealots of the drama sat late that night discussing the new points which the author had made in the last two acts of "Irène." They were fortunate to retain to so late a period an enthusiasm for the noble art which had been the solace of both their lives! "I have left off dying to come and see you," said Voltaire as he clasped in his arms his friend of sixty years.

The hotel of M. de Villette was near the centre of Paris, on the bank of the Seine, opposite the palace of the Tuileries. It was upon the corner of the Quai des Théatins and the Rue de Beaune. The house is still standing, an object of curiosity to strangers. The street retains its ancient name, Beaune, but that part of the river-front is now called Quai Voltaire. The house of M. d'Argental also faced the river, and was within a few minutes' walk of the Rue de Beaune. Cities which assist the development of civilization have their polite classes gathered into a West End, within reach of one another, thus furnishing to artists a Public capable of alarming, inspiring, and rewarding them, — a Public whose approval is glory and fortune, and gives prestige throughout the world. Old Paris enjoyed this advantage, and hence the people likely to have a personal interest in the new arrival lived within a short distance of the Quai des Théatins.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE EXILE'S WELCOME HOME.

VOLTAIRE in Paris, after an exile of twenty-eight years!

The way had been prepared for him by a series of kindred sensations, and the public mind had never been more susceptible to a generous sentiment. Readers will remember that, in those early weeks of the year 1778, the alliance between France and the United States was about to be completed and proclaimed, to the rapturous joy of both nations, and with the sympathy of all peoples. If the English ambassador lingered still, it was Franklin who represented the English-speaking races; it was he who moved about Paris, followed by admiring eyes, and cheered as loudly as the young king himself. To the excited Paris of that time Benjamin Franklin was the benignant, venerable embodiment of the ideal citizen, the ideal republican, the ideal philosopher, the ideal grandfather, all characters peculiarly dear to French sentiment. He was humorist also; his good things circulated in the drawing-rooms. After waiting nearly two years, he and his beloved "Insurgents" were about to be acknowledged as "OUR VERY DEAR GREAT FRIENDS AND ALLIES"!

Voltaire, too, was in Paris! All the diarists agree that the news of his arrival was electric. Baron Grimm exclaims, "No, the appearance of a phantom, of a ghost, of a prophet, or of an apostle could not have excited more surprise or admiration!" In the course of the first evening the tidings flew from circle to circle, from drawing-room to drawing-room, everywhere arresting and absorbing conversation. The next morning it was known, not merely to that small portion of the people who were commonly styled "all Paris," but to many of that greater multitude who knew Voltaire only as the saviour of the Calas family and the Sirvens. It reached Versailles, where it drew an alarming question from the king:

"Has the order forbidding M. de Voltaire's return to Paris been annulled?" Upon search no such order was found, and the king said no more; but the question was quickly reported to Voltaire, and struck a chill to his heart. His ancient policy of standing well with the woman who governed the man who governed France protected him once more. He wrote a conciliatory letter to the Countess de Polignac, the queen's favorite, and she had no difficulty in inducing the queen to keep the king quiet. Madame de Polignac sent him a reassuring reply, and soon after called upon him, with tranquillizing effect, though he still had some apprehensions on the side of the court.

Meanwhile, the tide of visitors had set in, and for many days continued; the passers-by also lingered opposite the house, so that there was a crowd all day upon the quay, waiting for a chance sight of the great man. In dressing-gown, cap, and slippers, he held a continuous reception, stealing away only now and then to note down an idea for "Irène," to change a line, to insert a couplet, or to speak to Wagnière, who was assiduously copying the amended *rôles*. An old man never before gave such an exhibition of readiness, gayety, tact, humor, spirit, understanding, as he did in the midst of this tumult of homage; while his serious thoughts were intent upon his play, his darling "Irène," the child of his old age, his last gift to the art and to the public he had served with loyal devotion from youth to hoary age. During the first day, it is said, more than three hundred persons called upon him, for each of whom, it was remarked, he had the right word, every visitor bearing away his anecdote to add to the *répertoire* of the diner-out.

Father Talleyrand, a gay priest of twenty-four, already beneficed and moving on toward his bishopric of Autun, intrigued for a pretext, and called upon him. At the opposite extreme of character was Turgot, who also hastened to pay his visit, though lame in both feet with gout. He was the man in all France whom Voltaire honored most. Turning to the company, after the first salutations, he said, "When I look upon M. Turgot, I think I see the statue of Nebuchadnezzar." "Yes," said Turgot, "the feet of clay." Upon which, with enchanting vivacity, Voltaire responded, "And the head of gold!

the head of gold!" Turgot's praises were often upon his lips during those days. "I have seen him," says Condorcet, "seize his hands, wet them with his tears, kiss them, despite all M. Turgot's efforts, and say, with a voice broken with emotion, 'Let me kiss that hand which signed the salvation of the people!'"

Dr. Franklin, too, was prompt to present his homage, and brought with him his grandson, then employed as secretary to the embassy. There was the usual crowd present, it appears. After the first greetings, Voltaire began to converse with Franklin in English, according to his custom with English visitors. The spectators drew near, desirous to hear whatever fell from the lips of the two men who were then dearest to the affections of the public. Madame Denis asked them to speak in French, that she and the company might understand them. "I beg your pardon," said he; "I have for a moment yielded to the vanity of showing that I can speak in the language of Franklin." Our philosopher asked him how he liked the constitutions of the United States, and the articles of confederation between them, recently published in Paris by the American envoys. "So well," he replied, "that, if I were only forty years old, I would immediately go and settle in your happy country."[1] Dr. Franklin then presented his grandson, a lad of about seventeen, and asked the old man's benediction upon him. Voltaire, lifting his hands above the young man's head, said, "My child, GOD AND LIBERTY, remember those two words." The company, as Wagnière and others report, were deeply moved, and Voltaire himself not less, for he mentioned the incident in several of his familiar notes of that and the following weeks. A few weeks later, all the American envoys called in form to pay their respects, when they found him in bed and scarcely able to converse. But he quoted a line or two in English from Thomson's "Ode to Liberty," published when he was in London, fifty years before.

We read also, in the American papers of that year, that a medal was struck in honor of Washington at Voltaire's expense, bearing on one side the inscription, "George Washington, Esqr., Commander of the Continental Army in America," and on the other a couplet composed by the poet, —

[1] Connecticut Gazette, September 11, 1778.

"Washington réunit, par un rare assemblage,
Des talens du guerrier et des vertus du sage."[1]

By a strange chance, Lord Stormont, the ambassador of England, called an hour after Franklin left. The company again remarked the facility and grace with which he adapted his conversation to the varying characters of his guests.

The French Academy, at their first meeting after his arrival, paid him an unusual mark of consideration by appointing a deputation of three of their members, headed by the Prince de Beauvau, to present the congratulations of the Academy, and to request his attendance at its sessions. The company of the Théâtre-Français came in a body to pay their respects. Their spokesman, alluding to the death of Lekain, said to him, "You see before you what is left of the company." Mademoiselle Clairon knelt to him. He replied to the compliment of the actors, "Henceforth, I live only through you and for you." He gave out the parts of the new tragedy, and appointed a time for the first rehearsal, after which the actors withdrew. When they were gone, he said to one who felicitated him upon the dramatic happiness of the interview, "Yes, we played comedy very well to one another." But Wagnière tells us that when they entered upon the rehearsals the scenes did not pass so smoothly. Madame Vestris was not disposed to act the heroine so much according to his fancy as her own, and she pouted at his unrelenting criticism of her delivery. "Really," said he one day, "I need not write verses of six feet, if you persist in swallowing three of them." Brizart, who played the part of Léonce, the high-priest, is said to have burst into open rebellion, saying, "For you to tell me how to do a thing is enough to make me not do it so." But, if he was an exacting manager, he was also a most docile author. After the first rehearsal, he admitted that the fifth act was not yet all that it might be, and, as soon as the house was quiet, he sat down to recast it. The next day Madame Vestris said to him, "Is it true, monsieur, that you have retouched my part?" "Madame," he replied, "I have labored for you all night as though I were a young man of twenty."

While the rehearsals continued, the flow of visitors did not

[1] Washington unites, by a rare combination, the talents of the warrior and the virtues of the sage. (Connecticut Gazette, August 28, 1778).

diminish, and the sensation of his presence appeared daily to increase. Some of the ministers called upon him, and others, who could not venture quite so far, sent to inquire after his health. The court ladies, finding they could do so without displeasing the queen, joined the movement. The Duchess de la Vallière, who was too old to go out-of-doors, sent him twelve ribbons for his hair. The Duchess de Cossé called; when he presented to her Belle-et-Bonne, she felicitated him upon having given her a husband. "I felicitate myself also," said he; "for I have made two happy and one wise." Madame Dubarry, who still lived in Paris as a *grande dame*, came one afternoon, long after the proper hour of dressing-gown and slippers. He was much embarrassed, and the reason of his embarrassment throws light upon the manners of the time and country: *he was not dressed to receive so distinguished a beauty!* It was only after much persuasion that he was prevailed upon to show himself to her in undress, and endeavor "to atone for the negligence of his attire by the charms of his conversation."

Madame du Deffand, old as she was, being past eighty-one, another relic of the age of Louis XIV., could not be indifferent to what was passing. She mentions, in one of her letters to Horace Walpole, that, on New Year's day of 1778, she had taken the fancy to dress up Pompon, the little son of her old servant Wiart, as a Capuchin monk, with frock, beard, cord, whip, chaplet, sandals, all complete, and sent him about the quarter to make New Year's calls upon her friends, particularly the Duchess of Choiseul, the Duchess of Grammont, and their immediate circle. In due time, the Duchess of Grammont brought to Madame du Deffand her New-Year's gifts, which consisted of six new volumes of Voltaire and a miniature of Madame du Deffand's favorite dog Ton-Ton. With these presents there was the following stanza: —

"Vous les trouvez tous deux charmants,
Nous les trouvons tous deux mordants:
Voilà la ressemblance.
L'un ne mord que ses ennemis,
Et l'autre mord tous vos amis,
Voilà la différence." [1]

[1] You find them both charming; we find them both biting: that is the resemblance. One bites only his enemies; the other bites all your friends: that is the difference.

Madame du Deffand, the correspondent of the biting author for half a century, and still a little in fear of that last tooth of his, had scarcely heard of his arrival when she sent him her Wiart with a congratulatory note. He replied the next morning, "I arrive dead; and I wish to rise again only to throw myself at the knees of Madame du Deffand." She was half disposed to go to him at once; but dreading, as she said, to meet at his house "all the histrionic *beaux-esprits*," she deferred doing so until the torrent of visitors had subsided a little. She sent Wiart again the next day to inquire after his health, and she gave the news to Horace Walpole: "Wiart has just come from Voltaire. He saw yesterday more than three hundred people. I shall avoid throwing myself into that crowd. All Parnassus was there, from the mire to the summit. He will not support this fatigue, and he may die before I have seen him."

This was written on Friday, February 12th, his third day in Paris; and on the 14th she paid him her first visit. The letter in which she described it is lost; but, a few days after, she went again, and of this interview she writes: —

"Voltaire came in, saying that he was dead, and could not open his mouth. I wished to leave, but he retained me, and spoke to me of his play, again proposing that I should attend a general rehearsal, to be held in his room, of which he would give me notice. The play is the only object he has in his mind. This it is which made him come to Paris, and it is this which will kill him if it is not a great success; but all conspires to make it succeed. Doubtless he has other expectations, — that of going to Versailles to see the king and the queen; but I doubt if he gets permission.

"He then told the Marquis de Villette to relate to me the visit which he had had from a priest; but as he began telling it awkwardly, Voltaire silenced him, took up the story, and told me that he had received a letter from an abbé, which expressed much joy at his arrival in Paris, and added that he ought not to doubt the warmth of his desire to know such a man as he was. 'At least,' said the abbé, 'accord me permission to come and see you. I have been a priest thirty years; I was with the Jesuits twenty years; I am esteemed and considered by the archbishop; I perform some services; I lend my assistance in various parishes of Paris, and I offer you my aid. Whatever superiority you have over other men, you are mortal like them; you are eighty-four years of age; you can foresee some moments that will be

difficult to pass. I could be useful to you, as I am to the Abbé de l'Attaignant,[1] who is older than you. I am going to dine and drink with him to-day; permit me to come and see you.' Voltaire consented; he has seen him, and is very well satisfied with him. 'That will save,' said he, 'some scandal or some ridicule.'"[2]

Here the old lady was interrupted, and she never completed her narrative. The accommodating abbé whom she mentions appears to have brought his two penitents into correspondence. The gay L'Attaignant sent Voltaire some verses, which he kept by him, waiting for a chance to reply in kind. Madame du Deffand said truly that all Parnassus thronged to the Rue de Beaune, and the gazettes teemed with verses and epigrams, — some of extravagant eulogy, some as biting as his own satire. A considerable number of these effusions have been preserved; it would not be difficult to find fifty of them in the diaries and letters of the period. Some of the poets brought their verses with them; others published them in the gazettes, sent a copy, and then called to receive the acknowledgments they felt to be their due. Le Brun-Pindare adopted this course, and has left an account of his reception by the aged poet, who, as Le Brun truly remarked, was "expiating his successes." He was indeed extremely fatigued, and showed it in his conversation.

"The paternal feeling," added Le Brun, "which he manifested for the young lady whom he had recently established in life really penetrated my soul. The tears rolled from his eyes while he was speaking to us of Belle-et-Bonne, as he named her, and comparing her natural graces with those of Madame Dubarry, who had just left him."

One of the minor poets had not such good fortune as Le Brun. Saint-Ange, after an interview in the cabinet, which was perhaps not very entertaining to the occupant thereof, addressed him thus as he was taking leave: "To-day, monsieur, I have come to see Homer. I shall call another day to see Euripides and Sophocles; afterwards, Tacitus; then, Lucian." He was continuing to enumerate the worthies of antiquity, when Voltaire interrupted him gayly: "Monsieur, I am very old; could you not pay all those visits to-day?" Nor did L. S.

[1] A noted diner-out of Paris, famous for his impromptu songs and repartees.

[2] 2 Lettres de la Marquise du Deffand, 305. Paris, 1864.

Mercier succeed very well with a compliment that had become wearisome by repetition. "You have," said Mercier, "as much surpassed your contemporaries in all ways as you will surpass Fontenelle in the art of living long." Voltaire responded, "Ah, monsieur, Fontenelle was a Norman, and cheated nature." The excellent marine painter, Vernet, on the other hand, was far outdone in compliment. Vernet having styled him one of the immortals, the poet replied, "It is you, rather, who will go to immortality; you use the truest and most durable colors." The modest painter endeavored to respond by kissing his hand. "No," said Voltaire; "if you kiss my hands I shall be obliged to kiss your feet."

Imagine the effect of this tumultuous life upon an old man accustomed for many years to the tranquil routine of a country house and a home farm! For fifteen days there was no diminution of the ferment; and, as the time drew near for the production of "Irène," he redoubled his exertions in declaiming the parts, drilling the actors, changing scenes and situations, as well as in revising plays to follow or accompany the new drama. He had also another tragedy on his hands, "Agathocle," which he had brought, half done, from Ferney, and which he depended upon to follow "Irène," in case of failure, which he began to apprehend with a mortal dread. His health visibly declined. Standing so many hours every day to receive company caused his feet to swell, for he had been accustomed at home to spend most of the working day upon his bed. Other painful and menacing symptoms warned him of the risk he was incurring, and he began to foresee the need of making arrangements in Paris to avoid the indignity of being denied burial. Ferney being five days' laborious journey from Paris, if he were taken sick, he could scarcely hope to be again in a condition to travel so far. He had had visits from several unbeneficed priests, besides the one whose coming he related to Madame du Deffand. One of these Wagnière had had the pleasure of hustling out of the room; but there was another, the Abbé Gaultier, who seemed more tolerable than the rest, and him he had received very politely, as a good-natured simpleton, who would be content with the minimum of concession from a penitent like himself. About February 20th, when he had been ten days in Paris, he consulted

D'Alembert upon the delicate point in question, and in a letter to the King of Prussia D'Alembert mentioned the advice he gave : —

"He asked me," wrote D'Alembert, "in the course of a confidential conversation, how I should advise him to proceed if, during his stay in Paris, he should happen to fall dangerously ill. My reply was such as every prudent [*sage*] man would have made in my place, that he would do well to conduct himself, in that case, like all the philosophers who had preceded him; among others, like Fontenelle and Montesquieu, who had followed the usage, '*and received you know what with much reverence.*'[1] He much approved my reply. 'I think the same,' said he to me; 'for I must not be thrown into the kennel, as I saw poor Lecouvreur.' He had, I know not why, much aversion to that manner of being interred. I avoided combating this aversion, desiring that, in case we should lose him, all should pass without trouble and without scandal."[2]

Fortified thus by the advice of the most eminent of his coworkers, he looked to the Abbé Gaultier, chaplain to the Hospital for the Incurable, as the man upon whom to call in case of need. That unhappy case soon arrived.

February 25th, his fifteenth day at Paris, about noon, as he was dictating in bed to Wagnière, he coughed violently three times, and a moment after cried out, "Oh! oh! I am spitting blood." The secretary turned toward him, and saw blood bursting from his nose and mouth, "with the same violence," he says, "as when the faucet is turned of a fountain upon which there is pressure." Wagnière rang, and Madame Denis came. Dr. Tronchin was sent for. All the household came running in, and the room was soon filled with people. "He ordered me," says Wagnière, "to write to the Abbé Gaultier, to ask him to come and speak to him, as he said he did not wish to be thrown into the sewers. I avoided sending my letter, not wishing to have it said that M. de Voltaire had shown weakness. I assured him that the abbé could not be found. Then he said to the persons who were in the room, 'At least, gentlemen, you will be witnesses that I have asked to fulfill what are here called our duties' [*devoirs.*]"

[1] Quoted from Voltaire's Epistle to the Duke of Sully, written in 1720.

[2] 25 Œuvres de Frédéric le Grand, 102. Berlin, 1854.

The doctor arrived and bled him; and when the patient had lost about three pints of blood the hæmorrhage diminished, though it did not cease for twenty-two days. Through the violence of his declamation he was supposed to have weakened a blood-vessel, which broke, as described by the secretary. The doctor told him not to utter a word, and begged the people of the house neither to talk to him nor let any one enter his room. He provided also a very competent nurse, and had a surgeon sleep every night in the next room. For three or four days the patient was extremely weak, and sufficiently obedient to the doctor's orders. Very slowly, and with frequent relapses, he gained a little strength. Several of the notes which he wrote and dictated to Dr. Tronchin during his dubious convalescence have been preserved, all of which contain gleams of his wonted gayety and complaisance. An ill-turn, however, induced him to send again for the Abbé Gaultier. Upon his arrival, the patient said to him, "Some days ago I invited you to come and see me for you know what. If you please, we will at once transact that little business." The abbé replied, "Very willingly," and requested all present to leave the room. "The patient wished us to remain," says Wagnière, "but the Abbé Gaultier did not." So they all went out, and left the priest alone with his penitent for an hour. On that morning D'Alembert visited him, and his narrative, as given in his letter to the King of Prussia, is the best source of our information concerning what followed: —

"Finding himself worse than usual on one of the days of his sickness, he bravely took the part of doing what he had agreed upon. During a visit which I paid him in the morning, as he spoke to me with considerable vehemence, and as I begged him to be silent in order not to distress his chest, he said to me, laughing, 'Talk I must, whether I wish it or not; don't you remember that I have to confess? The moment has come, as Henry IV. said, to make the perilous leap; so I have sent for the Abbé Gaultier, and I am waiting for him.' This Abbé Gaultier, sire, is a poor devil of a priest, who, of his own motion and from mere good-will, introduced himself to M. de Voltaire some days before his sickness, and offered him, in case of need, his ecclesiastical services. M. de Voltaire accepted them, because this man appeared to him more moderate and reasonable than three or four other wretched priests [*capelans*], who, without being sent for, and without

any more knowing Voltaire than the Abbé Gaultier, had come to his room to preach to him like fanatics, to announce to him hell and the judgments of God, and whom the old patriarch, from goodness of heart, had not ordered to be thrown out of the window. This Abbé Gaultier arrived, then, was shut up an hour with the sick man, and came out so well satisfied that he wished to go at once to get at the parish church what we call the *bon Dieu*. This the sick man did not wish, 'for the reason,' said he, 'that I am spitting blood, and I might by ill-chance spit out something else.' He gave to this Abbé Gaultier, who asked him for it, a profession of faith, written entirely with his own hand, and by which he declared that he wished to die in the Catholic religion, in which he was born, hoping from the divine mercy that God would deign to pardon all his faults; and added that, if he had ever scandalized the church, he asked pardon from God and from it. He added this last article at the requisition of the priest, '*and*,' said he, '*to have peace*.' He gave this profession of faith to the Abbé Gaultier in the presence of his family and of those of his friends who were in his chamber; two of whom signed as witnesses at the bottom of the profession."

So far, D'Alembert. The profession of faith, written in Voltaire's own hand, was as follows: —

"I, the undersigned, declare that, having been attacked four days ago by a vomiting of blood, at the age of eighty-four years, and being unable to get to church, the curé of Saint-Sulpice having been willing to add to his good works that of sending to me the Abbé Gaultier, priest, I have confessed to him; and declare further that, if God disposes of me, I die in the Catholic religion, in which I was born, hoping from the divine mercy that he will deign to pardon all my faults, and that if I have ever scandalized the church I ask pardon of God and of it. Signed, VOLTAIRE, March 2, 1778, in the house of the Marquis de Villette, in the presence of the Abbé Mignot, my nephew, and of the Marquis de Villevielle, my friend."

Wagnière, being a Protestant, and in extreme ill-humor with the persons surrounding his "dear master," regarded this transaction with such sorrow and indignation that, when Voltaire asked him what was the matter with him, he could not command his voice to reply. Four days before this ceremonial, at a moment when it appeared certain that the patient could not recover, and he felt sure himself that he was dying, Wagnière

begged him to state precisely his "way of thinking." He asked for paper and ink; then wrote, signed, and gave to his secretary the following declaration: —

"I die, adoring God, loving my friends, not hating my enemies, and detesting superstition. February 28, 1778. VOLTAIRE." [1]

With this paper in his possession, and having Swiss ideas of the sanctity of the seriously spoken word of a dying man, poor Wagnière was aghast at the tone of the company on this occasion. "When," he says, "the Abbé Gaultier invited us to reënter the room, he said to us, 'M. de Voltaire has given me a little declaration, which does not signify much. I beg you will be so good as to sign it also.'" The Abbé Mignot and the Marquis de Villevielle signed it without hesitation, and without knowing its contents. "The abbé then came to me, and asked me to do the same thing. I refused him. He insisted much. M. de Voltaire observed with surprise the vivacity with which I spoke to the Abbé Gaultier. I replied at last, tired of this persecution, that I neither would nor could sign, as I was a Protestant. He then let me alone. He next proposed to the sick man to give him the communion. He replied, 'Mr. Abbé, observe that I continually spit blood; I must beware of mingling that of the good God with mine.' The confessor did not reply. He was asked to retire, and he went out." Before leaving he received from his penitent a gift of twenty-five louis for "the poor of the parish;" which also was according to polite usage.

For a short time he rested in the belief that he had made all the concessions which "decorum" required. La Harpe came, in the course of the day, to inquire concerning his health on behalf of the Academy, and to inform him that the Academy had voted to obtain and put on record news of his health at every session, as long as his sickness lasted. "Alas," said he, "I have thought that I could not better recognize the goodness of the Academy than by fulfilling my duties as a Christian, in order to be interred in holy ground, and to have the service at the church of the Cordeliers." [2] He said also to the Abbé Duvernet, "They will not throw me into the

[1] The original is now in the National Library, at Paris.

[2] At this church a solemn service was held upon the death of an Academician.

kennel, for I have confessed to the Abbé Gaultier." But he was reckoning without the curé of Saint-Sulpice, in whose extensive and wealthy parish he was then living; "a man," says D'Alembert, "of little understanding and a bigoted fanatic." But he was an important personage in Paris, as well from his lineage as from his office. In the course of the day on which this confession was made, the curé called upon the convert, and, though not permitted to enter his room, he left the impression that he was not satisfied with what had occurred. "He seemed vexed," says D'Alembert, "that he had not been sent for rather than a street-corner priest. It was a conversion which he had had at heart to make himself, and which had been impolitely purloined from him by an adventurer." New alarms! It was the parish priest who had the disposal of the dead in his parish! The invalid, March 4th, two days after his confession, wrote to the curé an excessively civil letter, to which the priest replied with equal politeness and at great length.

"I know, monsieur, [concluded the pastor], that you are beneficent. If you permit me to converse with you sometimes, I hope you will agree that, in adopting perfectly the sublime philosophy of the gospel, you can do the greatest good, and add to the glory of having carried the human mind to the highest development attainable, the merit of the sincerest virtue; of which divine wisdom, clothed with our nature, has given us the just idea, and furnished the perfect model, not to be found by us elsewhere. You overwhelm me, monsieur, with the obliging things which you are pleased to say to me, and which I do not merit. It would be beyond my abilities to reply to them by enrolling myself among the number of the men of learning and genius who bear to you, with so much enthusiasm, their tributes and their homage. For my part, I have nothing to offer you except the wish for your solid welfare, and the sincerity of the sentiments with which I have the honor to be your most obedient and humble servant."

Here the affair rested for the time. The news of this "conversion" was a topic in all the circles, and elicited the usual number of jests, in prose and verse. The most noted epigram of the hour was preserved by Madame du Deffand in one of her letters:[1] "Voltaire and l'Attaignant, both of gentle humor, to the same confessor have made the same avowal.

[1] 2 Lettres, 314.

Monsieur Gaultier seems to me to have been well chosen; the honor of two such cures was reserved by good right to the chaplain of the Incurable."

The penitent himself contributed his share to the merriment of the occasion; for all that he said was reported. "It is necessary," he would say, "for a man to die in the religion of his fathers. If I lived upon the banks of the Ganges, I should wish to die with a cow's tail in my hand." And when a gazette was brought to him, filled with satirical verses upon the late events, he said, "At Ferney I receive such stuff every week, and have to pay postage upon it; here, it is sent to me every day, and costs me nothing, which is a much better bargain." Except honest Wagnière, who, being a Protestant and a Swiss, could not be supposed to understand these Catholic subtleties, no one seems to have been shocked at the proceeding. The gravest men about him only thought that he had taken needless trouble; he had gone a little further than was strictly necessary for the accomplishment of the object.

The first performance of "Irène" was appointed for Monday, March 16th, and it could not be conveniently delayed. After these exciting scenes he fell into a kind of languor, which not only prevented his superintendence of the rehearsals, but rendered him indifferent to the play, upon which he had earnestly labored at intervals for two years. He was unwilling to hear the piece spoken of, and left the last rehearsals and the distribution of tickets to his niece and his angel. In four days it was remarked he had grown four years older. So changed was he that when his friends, with a view to rousing him from his torpor, showed him some verses against his tragedy, he gave them back without a word, and without showing any interest.

The rehearsals, meanwhile, continued daily at the house of M. de Villette, presided over by Madame Denis. The tripod, namely, D'Argental, La Harpe, and other intimate advisers, deemed it necessary to make some final alterations in the piece, which obliged the insertion of a considerable number of new lines. La Harpe, remembering, perhaps, the astonishing docility of his master at Ferney some years before, did not hesitate to assist in composing them; nor did Madame Denis and D'Argental refuse consent to their insertion.

The great day arrived, long expected by the public with impatience. Seats had seldom before been sought with such avidity, nor the doors besieged by such a concourse. The whole court was present, with the single exception of the king. The beautiful young queen was there with her ladies; the Duke de Bourbon also, and the Count d'Artois. The audience, in a word, was all that it could be of brilliant and distinguished. The play attained not precisely what the French call a "success of esteem," but rather a success of respect. The cabal, composed of the adherents of the late Fréron, was overwhelmed and nearly silenced by the splendid and compact crowd of the author's admirers. If there was an occasional murmur at a slow scene, there were hearty bursts of applause at every gleam and sparkle of the old fire. The queen was observed to be particularly attentive. She held a pencil in her hand, and seemed to be writing down the verses which struck her most. There was one passage, descriptive of the restraints of royal etiquette, which might have been written expressly for her: —

"Je vois que notre sexe est né pour l'esclavage.
Sur le trône, en tout temps, ce fut votre partage.
Ces moments si brillant, si courts, et si trompeurs,
Qu'on nommait vos beaux jours, etaient de longs malheurs.
Souveraine de nom, vous serviez sous un maître;
Et quand vous êtes libre, et que vous devez l'être,
Le dangereux fardeau de votre dignité
Vous replonge à l'instant dans la captivité!
Les usages, les lois, l'opinion publique,
Le devoir, tout vous tient sous un joug tyrannique."[1]

Readers of Madame Campan will recall incidents in the routine of Marie Antoinette's court life that might have suggested these lines. The author of the play had given the pontiff, Léonce, some moving verses upon the awe which religion and its high-priests inspire in untutored minds. "The honors of the prince yield to those of the priest, and hold over mankind a longer and a wider sway. One word, spoken in the

[1] I see that our sex is formed for slavery. Upon the throne, at all times, it was your lot. Those moments, so brilliant, so short, and so deceptive, which were called your beautiful days, were long miseries. Sovereign in name, you served under a master; and now that you are free, and ought to be free, the dangerous burden of your dignity replunges you at once into captivity! Usages, laws, public opinion, duty, all hold you under a tyrannical yoke.

name of heaven and of religion, commands kings, puts into their mouths a sacred rein, which *they champ upon their knees.*"

"Mon cilice, qu'un prince avec dédain contemple,
L'emporte sur sa pourpre, et lui commande au temple."[1]

At this passage a jester in the parquette cried out, "It is plain he has been to confession!" which might have been a perilous joke fifty years before. The queen, it was said, took particular care to write down these lines to show the king what a good Christian Voltaire had become. But then, in the next scene, Prince Alexis turns upon the pontiff with some vigorous lines of an opposite tendency: "I will break the altar which you defend, — that altar in all times the rival of the diadem, the fatal instrument of so many passions, loaded by our ancestors with the gold of nations, cemented with their blood, surrounded by the fruits of rapine!" The queen must have chosen her passages with discretion if she desired to present evidence of the poet's sound conversion.

During the performance of the tragedy, the author lay in bed at home, attended only by his nurse and surgeon; for even the faithful Wagnière was at the theatre. He had ceased to be indifferent to the success of his play. At the end of the second act, a messenger was dispatched from the theatre to say to him that all was going as well as possible. At the end of the third and fourth acts, similar messages reached him, though slightly less emphasized. At the close of the piece, M. Dupuits, the husband of Marie Corneille, rushed from the theatre, and ran at full speed, to be the first to tell him that the curtain had fallen amid the warmest acclamations of the whole audience. All the family and all the tripod soon thronged into his room, congratulating him upon this success of his old age. "What you tell me," said he, feebly, "consoles, but does not cure me." Nevertheless, he wished to know what passages, what speeches, what verses, had produced the most effect, and it was evident that the success of the play had given him relief and pleasure.

The excitement, however, came near causing another relapse, and the next day he was not so well. At the second

[1] My hair-shirt, which a prince contemplates with disdain, outranks his purple and commands him in the temple.

representation, the parquette asked for news of the author's health, when one of the actors came forward and said, "The health of M. de Voltaire is not as good as we could desire for your pleasures and our interest." From this time he gained daily in strength, and in a few days his door was once more open to visitors. March 19th, three days after the production of the tragedy, the French Academy sent a deputation of its members to congratulate the veteran upon its success, — a compliment which he returned by dedicating to the Academy the printed edition.

As he regained health, his interest in the play revived in all its force, and he began to look forward eagerly to seeing it himself upon the theatre of his ancient glory. Before doing so, it occurred to him to send for the prompter's copy and the actors' parts, that he might still correct and amend, according to his custom. The manuscripts were brought; he discovered the lines inserted, and a scene ensued that threatened to be tragic indeed. Let the faithful secretary describe the just and natural anger of an artist of sixty years' standing, thus outraged while he lay helpless and unconscious. No one can enter into his feelings or allow for his excessive wrath who does not know how artists work, who has not observed the infinite and tireless solicitude by which alone excellence is even approached.

"He made his niece [says Wagnière] confess that she had consented to the additions. Such was his fury against her, and against the other correctors, that never, during more than twenty-four years that I was attached to him, had I seen him in so violent a state of mind. He roughly pushed away Madame Denis, who, in recoiling, fell into an arm-chair, or rather into the arms of him whom she has since married [M. Duvivier], who happened to be sitting in that arm-chair. When M. de Voltaire was heard approaching the drawing-room, they made M. d'Argental leave it quickly. To him also he directed the bitterest reproaches. No one was willing to name to him the authors of the ridiculous verses which had been inserted in the place of his own. Count d'Argental, who heard him from an adjoining room, reëntered, to try to exculpate himself; but M. de Voltaire treated him harshly before all the company, and asked him to return the amended 'Droit du Seigneur,' 'Agathocle,' and other papers which he had confided to him. He forced Madame Denis, as an accomplice, to go at once and get them at the house of M. d'Argental; to which

she was obliged to go on foot through the rain. That did not serve to revive her affection for her uncle. This effervescence lasted nearly twelve hours. The hæmorrhage of M. de Voltaire continued. I trembled at every moment, expecting to see him fall dead, which would have happened, perhaps, to a young man who should have put himself into such a condition. Nevertheless, no ill consequences followed, and his discharge of blood ceased some days after. I told him the next day, before M. d'Alembert, that, since this adventure had not killed him, it would be necessary, when it was desired that he should die, to knock him down with a club.'

"During this drawing-room quarrel, he said, '*Pardieu!* they treat me here as they would not dare to treat even the son of M. Barthe!' He did not know that M. Barthe was in a corner of the room at the moment. As soon as M. de Voltaire had gone out, M. Barthe began to make a terrible noise [*un tapage du diable*]. He absolutely wished to have satisfaction for the imaginary insult which had just been offered him. It took four people to hold him; he could not be calmed. I believed at every moment that M. de Voltaire would have to fight him. Some one went to give an account of the affair to the invalid, who was very much astonished that M. Barthe had heard his remark, and he sent him word that he had never presumed to insult either himself or his son, or his verses, for which he had all the respect they merited. He came, a moment after, to assure him of this in person, when he added, 'If the verses of your son had been corrected as ridiculously as mine have been, would you have suffered it? This is all I meant to say.' The spectators began to laugh, and M. Barthe with the rest, and thus terminated a very amusing tragi-comic scene."

But when the storm subsided, he was filled with contrition at having spoken so harshly to D'Argental, his oldest friend, his guardian angel, his best beloved of living men. He hastened to write to him:—

"Pardon, my dear angel. My head of eighty-four years is really only fifteen; but you must have pity upon a wounded man who cries out, not being able to speak. Think that I am dying; think that, while dying, I have finished 'Irène,' 'Agathocle,' the 'Droit du Seigneur,' and done four acts of 'Atrée.' Think that Molé [the actor] mutilated me unworthily, foolishly, and insolently; that he is not willing to play his part in the 'Droit du Seigneur,' etc. I am dead; and yet I must be running about to First Gentleman of the chamber. See if it is not permitted to me to cry out. Nevertheless, I confess that I ought not to have cried out so loud. I am yours, my angel, at every hour."

To De Thibouville, also, he wrote in pathetic terms: "I was in despair; I believed myself despised and abased by friends, the most worthy. The constancy of their goodness heals the horrible wound of my heart, and prevents my dying of chagrin rather than from my loss of blood. Let me have the consolation of seeing you before you go out." He made his peace with the actors, too, one or two of whom appear to have made crude emendations of their own. Madame Denis was easily consoled, so long as there was no prospect of a return to the remote and dismal exile of Ferney. He had then been nearly seven weeks in Paris, and still, to Wagnière's sore distress and disappointment, there was no prospect of a speedy return home. Madame Denis, already much in harmony with her Duvivier, shuddered at the mere thought of going back to Ferney, and all her friends were in league with her to induce her uncle to remain in Paris. So far, he was firm for returning, and Wagnière, whose family were part of the Ferney household, strove by all the means in his power to strengthen him in his wise purpose. Toward the end of March he found himself so much better that he resolved to dress, ride out, see the new parts of his native city, and begin to return the calls with which he had been honored by distinguished ladies. Monday, March 30th, he was to show himself to the public at the theatre, and see his play performed. It was time, he thought, to cast off the invalid, and let the metropolis see how gentlemen comported themselves when Louis XIV. was king.

CHAPTER XLIV.

STIFLED UNDER ROSES.

On a Sunday morning, toward the end of March, M. de Voltaire was in the drawing-room dressed to go out, and horses were in the court-yard harnessing to a carriage. Fashion had not then become the exacting tyrant she is to-day, and people could dress according to fancies or reminiscences of their own without being suspected of lunacy. But the costume in which he now presented himself was so extraordinary that, it was said, children in the street thought he was attired for a masquerade. He was merely dressed in the showy style of about 1750, when he was last in Paris, and when the luxuriant wig of the previous reign was still in some vogue. In 1778, there was, we are told, only one of those stupendous creations left in Paris, until the arrival of Voltaire added a second. A red cloth coat, lined with some of the ermine sent him from Russia by the Empress Catherine II., hung loosely upon his attenuated figure. That great wig of the *grand monarque*, a torrent of powdered curls, so covered the upper part of his person that little of it was visible except his eyes "shining like carbuncles." Upon this wig was to be lightly placed a square red cap, resembling a crown; and in his hand he carried a little cane with a head of crow's beak. White silk stockings of Ferney manufacture clothed his meagre legs, and he wore the large silver buckles of the time upon his low shoes.

He was in the drawing-room, about half past ten in the morning, waiting for the carriage to be announced, when two visitors arrived. One of these was Longchamp, his secretary and factotum of thirty years before, now a respectable family man and thriving map publisher of Paris; the other was one of Longchamp's customers, a literary personage, whom the map maker had induced to present him to his old master. Longchamp explains that he called at this early hour because he

did not wish to meet Madame Denis, who seldom came downstairs before noon. He could count upon Voltaire's forgiveness and good-will; but the lady, he felt, would be implacable.

"From the entrance of the drawing-room [says Longchamp] I perceived M. de Voltaire standing, completely dressed, a cane in his hand and his hat under his arm, talking with two men, who were unknown to me. I advanced towards him, trembling. The instant he turned his eyes upon me, he recognized me, and pronounced my name, although he had not seen me for twenty-eight years. This reassured me, and I quickened my pace, with the intention of throwing myself at his feet; but he hindered me from doing this, and kept my hand in his, beginning at once to question me upon my condition and family. I replied as briefly as I could, and I assured him that, if I had had a little success in my labors, I was conscious of owing it only to the early instruction I had received from him, both at Paris and at Cirey, as well as to his former benefactions. He seemed to listen with interest to the few details which I could give him. He spoke then to my guide, and said some very obliging things to him. Ten minutes had scarcely passed, when they came to notify M. de Voltaire that his carriage was ready. We took leave at once. He told us that he was going to see several of his old friends, and that, if we would return another day, he would receive us with pleasure. In descending the stairs I was so much moved with what I had just seen and heard that the tears fell from my eyes. M. de Voltaire appeared to me very much broken, although he seemed to enjoy the full use of his senses, and his voice was very strong."[1]

He entered the carriage, and began his round of visits, frequently recognized and saluted by passers-by, occasionally cheered with enthusiasm by a group or a crowd. His name was upon every tongue, and that person was happy who could say, "I have seen him." Wagnière, on this very Sunday morning, told him of a street auctioneer whom he had heard recommending a book of "Tricks with Cards" by claiming the patriarch of Ferney as the inventor of one of them. "Now, gentlemen," cried the vender, "here is a trick which I learned at Ferney from that great man who is making so much noise here, that famous Voltaire, our master in all things!" This anecdote amused him very much.

It may have been on this first round of visits that he ventured to call upon Madame de Gouvernet, whom he had known and loved sixty years before as Mademoiselle Livri, the pretty

[1] 1 Mémoires par Longchamp et Wagnière, 359.

actress trained by him and introduced to the Théâtre-Français. After her marriage to the Marquis de Gouvernet, she had refused to see him, and he wrote the little poem before mentioned, "Les Tu et les Vous;" and, later, he made her a personage of his comedy "L'Ecossaise." She was now a widow, past eighty, extremely respectable, and a good Catholic; but she made him welcome in her house, and they conversed agreeably together. He talked to her, as he did to all his friends, of Belle-et-Bonne, the consolation of his old age, and Madame de Gouvernet showed him the portrait of himself which he had given her in the days when they rode and acted and supped merrily together in old Paris gardens. He told her that he should like his Belle-et-Bonne to see the picture, and know how he looked in those far distant days before her father was born. Upon his return home he said, "My friends, I have just passed from one bank of the Cocytus to the other!" The next morning the lady sent the portrait to him as a gift, and he gave it to Madame de Villette, who cherished it as one of her chief possessions during a long life. In this romantic way was preserved for us the only painting of the youthful poet which has either authority or merit. An engraving from it enriches the first volume of this work.

He was punctilious to return every visit he had had from a lady, and the ladies, on their part, were most eager to receive him in their houses. Nor was the conversation always upon the light topics that are supposed to be most suitable for such occasions. In one house, where a number of ladies were present, who all crowded fondly about him, the mistress reproached him for the obstinacy with which he continued to assail the church and its beliefs. "Be moderate and generous," said she, "after the *victory!* What can you fear at present from such adversaries? The fanatics are prostrate [*à terre*]; they can no longer injure; their reign is past." To these words, softly spoken by the lady, herself not long to live, he replied, "You are in error, madame. It is a fire that is covered, not extinguished. Those fanatics, those Tartuffes, are mad dogs. They are muzzled, but they have not lost their teeth. It is true, they bite no more; but, on the first opportunity, if their teeth are not drawn, you will see if they will not bite!"[1]

[1] J. Clogenson. Preface to the Facéties de Voltaire. 61 Œuvres de Voltaire, xi.

The desire to see and to hear about this wonderful old man increased daily, particularly among ladies who had famous *salons*. He was so manifestly the idol of Paris that it became a question with ministers and princes whether it was politic for the court to withhold its countenance from him. The queen, too, was curious to know and converse with him. When it was proposed to assign him an arm-chair at the national theatre, an honor enjoyed by Corneille and Racine, the queen wished him rather to have a box upholstered like her own, and next to hers, that she might converse with him at her ease every evening. The king still had influence enough to prevent this. Hearing the name of Voltaire again pronounced in the queen's boudoir, he said, "Ah, ah, M. de Voltaire! He is in Paris! That is true, but it is without my permission." Some one said, "But, sire, he was never exiled." The king rejoined, "That may be, but I know what I am saying." [1]

The royal family, it appears, came at length to a formal resolution with regard to this inconvenient and portentous visitor, whose prestige the court, long the source of prestige in France, could neither diminish nor increase. It is a fact of much interest for students of human nature that Louis Capet and François Arouet should have stood in such a relation to one another, and that, upon the whole, it should have been a just and necessary relation; King Louis being much nearer the average man than his rival, and a truer representative of human nature. If Voltaire had, for the moment, "all Paris" at his chariot wheels, Louis Capet had the human race behind him, — a race governed always through its imagination. It was not, therefore, Voltaire who cut Louis Capet, but Louis Capet who would not know Voltaire. Madame Campan, first *femme* to the queen, says in a well-known passage, —

"There was a grave inconvenience in allowing Paris to pronounce with such transports an opinion so contrary to that of the court. This was hinted to the queen, and it was suggested to her that she ought at least, without according Voltaire the honor of a presentation, to admit him to her drawing-room. She was not very far from following this advice, and appeared embarrassed only as to what she should say to him in case she consented to see him. She was advised to speak

[1] 6 Correspondance secrète, politique, et littéraire, 49. Lettre de Versailles. John Adamson, London.

to him only of the 'Henriade,' 'Mérope,' and 'Zaïre.' The queen said to those who had taken the liberty to make these observations to her that she should further consult persons in whom she had great confidence. The next day she said it was irrevocably decided that Voltaire should see no member of the royal family, his writings being full of principles that made a too direct attack on religion and morals. 'It is strange, nevertheless,' added the queen, in giving her answer, 'that we should refuse to admit Voltaire to our presence as the chief of the philosophical writers, and that Madame de Mouchy should have been willing, as a result of the intrigues of the sect, to present to me, a few years ago, Madame Geoffrin, who owed her celebrity to her title of Nurse of the Philosophers.'"

The court therefore did not recognize his presence at the capital, and contrived, with its usual tact, to extract from his visit the greatest possible amount of odium and contempt.

Monday evening, March 30th, he was to witness "Irène" at the theatre, after having first attended a session of the Academy. A crowd of people filled the two streets, at the corner of which the house of M. de Villette was situated. About four in the afternoon, he came out of the door, wearing the cloak of fine marten fur also given him by Catherine II., and took his place in the carriage; the body of which being blue and covered with stars, a jester in the crowd called it the Car of the Empyrean, — the only word savoring of satire which reached the ears of his friends that day. The multitude, which was so dense that the coachman had great difficulty in getting a passage, gave him cheer upon cheer, and rushed after the carriage in a tumultuous body. A young man, a stranger in the city, was thrown by the crowd upon the shoulders of the patriarch, and got down, covered with powder from his wig, without having had the pleasure of seeing him. The court of the Louvre, where the Academy held its sessions, was already filled with people awaiting his arrival, who received him with cheers and clapping of hands. Even a crowd in Paris, in those days, had its sense of decorum, and shouted "*Vive Monsieur de Voltaire!*"

The Academy paid him the honor of gathering in a body to meet him in their outer hall,— an honor never before conceded to any member, nor even to foreign princes invited to attend its sessions. Of the Forty, there were only twenty-one mem-

bers present, including Voltaire, all the clergy being absent except two abbés, who, it was said, had nothing of their profession except its garb, and nothing to expect either from the court or the church. The patriarch was conducted to the president's chair, and was elected, without a dissentient voice, to the next three months' presidency, a distinction usually decided by lot. The essay of the occasion was a eulogy of Boileau, by D'Alembert. The essayist did not deny himself the pleasure of alluding to their fellow-member, who seemed, by an absence of twenty-eight years, to have become their guest. In discoursing of the early masters of French poetry, he named Boileau, Racine, and Voltaire. "I name the last," said he, "although he is still living; for why should we refuse ourselves the pleasure of seeing in advance a great man in the place to which posterity destines him?" He concluded an elegant passage by comparing the poetry of Boileau, correct, strong, and nervous, to the fine statue of The Gladiator; that of Racine, not less correct, but more marrowy and smooth, to the Venus de Medici; and that of Voltaire, easy, graceful, and always noble, to the Apollo Belvidere. Every allusion to Voltaire in the essay was received with enthusiastic applause, and the poet himself could not conceal his emotion. As soon as the essay was ended the company rose, and followed him to the hall where they had received him.

After a short visit to the office of D'Alembert, the perpetual secretary of the Academy, time pressing, he again entered his carriage, which made its way with increased difficulty to the theatre, where he was met by the Villettes and other friends, anxious to prevent his being crushed by the crowd. The moment the carriage stopped, people climbed upon the box, and even upon the wheels, to get a nearer view. One man, as Wagnière relates, sprang over the others, upon the step, and asked to be permitted to kiss the poet's hand. The man seized, by mistake, the hand of Madame de Villette, and said, after having kissed it, "By my faith, that is a very plump hand for a man of eighty-four!" The women were as excited as the men. As he passed into the theatre through a lane of ladies, very narrow and close, fair hands were thrust from it to snatch hairs from his fur cloak, worn to-day for the first time in public.

Upon his entrance the audience received him with the loudest acclamations. He made his way to the second tier, and entered the box assigned to the gentlemen of the king's chamber, which was directly opposite to that of the king's brother, the Count d'Artois. Madame Denis and Belle-et-Bonne were already seated in the box, and the old man was disposed to hide himself behind them. "To the front! To the front!" cried the parquette; and he took his seat between the ladies, in view of a great part of the house. Another cry was distinguished: "The crown! The crown!" The actor Brizard, a man of grand presence, who was to play Léonce, entered the box bearing a laurel crown, which he placed upon the poet's head, the audience applauding with the utmost enthusiasm. "Ah, Dieu!" said the patriarch, "you wish, then, to make me die of glory!" He drew the crown from his head with modest haste, and handed it to Belle-et-Bonne; upon which the crowd shouted to her to put it back. She tried to do so. He was unwilling to permit it; he resisted; he refused the homage; until, at length, the Prince de Beauvau, seizing the laurel, fastened it upon the brow of the poet, who saw that the struggle would be useless.

The scene at this moment has perhaps never been paralleled in a theatre. The whole house was upon its feet; the aisles, passages, lobbies, anterooms, all were crowded to suffocation; and even the actors, dressed to begin the play, came out in front of the curtain to join in the glorious tumult. It was observed that several ladies, unable to get a sight of him from their boxes, had ventured even into the parquette, regardless of the usage that usually excluded them. Baron Grimm mentions that he saw people in the parquette under the boxes going down upon their knees, despairing of getting a sight in any other way. The theatre was darkened by the dust caused by the movement of the excited multitude. The delirium lasted more than twenty minutes, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that silence could be restored and the performance begun.

As it was the sixth representation of the play, the audience was able to anticipate the passages most characteristic of the author, which were applauded more with reference to their Voltairean significance than their dramatic merit. When the

curtain fell upon the fifth act, the tumult was renewed, and the author was about to utter a few words expressive of his gratification, when the curtain rose once more, and revealed to the spectators a striking scene. Upon a pedestal in the middle of the stage was the bust of the poet, familiar to the public as a recent addition to the lobby of the theatre. Around it, in a semicircle, the actors and actresses were ranged, each holding a garland of flowers and palm. Behind them were a number of persons who had crowded from the front of the theatre and witnessed the play from the stage, as of old; while at the back were posted the guards who had figured in the piece. This tableau had been hastily arranged, but the effect was pleasing and picturesque. The audience burst into new acclamations. Baron Grimm remarked a fact without precedent in the history of the French theatre, that not one dissentient nor derisive cry was heard amid the shouts of applause. "For once," said he, "envy and hate, fanaticism and intolerance, dared not murmur, except in secret, and, for the first time, perhaps, in France, public opinion was seen enjoying with *éclat* all its empire." Brizard, still wearing his priestly dress, was the first to place upon the bust the wreath which he carried in his hand; prophetic of the time, now not distant, when the class represented by Léonce will recognize Voltaire as their deliverer from a false position. All the company followed his example, to the sound of drums and trumpets, often drowned by the cheers of the spectators.

During this scene, the poet, abashed and confounded, had remained in the back part of his box. When all the crowns had been placed upon the head of the bust, covering it with flowers and palms, M. de Villette, in response to the universal demand of the audience, drew him forward again, and he stood for a moment bending almost to the edge of the box. Then he rose; his eyes filled with tears, and sat by the side of Belle-and-Bonne. Madame Vestris, who had played Irène, advanced to the front of the stage, holding a paper in her hand, from which she read some lines written for the occasion by the Marquis de Saint-Marc: —

"Aux yeux de Paris enchanté,
Reçois en ce jour un hommage
Que confirmera d'âge en âge
Le sévère postérité.

Non, tu n'as pas besoin d'atteindre au noir rivage,
Pour jouir de l'honneur de l'immortalité.
Voltaire, reçois la couronne
Que l'on vient de te présenter.
Il est beau de la mériter,
Quand c'est la France qui la donne!" [1]

These verses, well delivered by the actress, renewed the transports of the audience, who demanded their repetition. Madame Vestris recited them again. The curtain fell. A few moments after, it rose again for the performance of Voltaire's comedy of "Nanine," during which the bust was visible on one side of the stage. When the curtain fell for the last time, the author rose, and made his slow descent to the street between the same compact lines of ladies, all beaming and radiant with joyous emotion. As soon as he had mounted the carriage, a cry arose for torches, that the whole crowd might see him. There was so much difficulty in starting the vehicle that it was proposed to detach the horses. The coachman, however, at length contrived to begin the journey homeward, moving at a very slow pace, and followed by a multitude of excited people, crying, *Vive Voltaire!* As soon as he had gained his own room, he was relieved by a flood of tears. "If I could have foreseen," said he, "that the people would have committed so many follies, I would not have gone to the theatre."

The next morning he did not appear to be excessively fatigued, and he again received crowds of company, who came to congratulate him upon his triumph.

The queen appeared to emphasize her absence from the theatre on this occasion by driving into Paris, as if she meant to join in the triumph, and then going to the Italian opera instead. She was attended by the Count d'Artois, who was destined, fifty years after, to reign as Charles X., and to ruin the "Restoration" by his blind bigotry. At this period he affected a sympathy with the prevailing enthusiasm, and, as soon as he had waited upon the queen to her box at the opera, he slipped away, and went to the Théâtre-Français. Wagnière

[1] In the sight of enchanted Paris, receive to-day an homage which severe posterity will confirm from age to age. No, you have not need to reach the dark shore in order to enjoy the honor of immortality. Voltaire, receive the crown just presented to you. It is beautiful to merit it when it is France that gives it.

chronicles that he sent the Prince de Henin to Voltaire's box to compliment him on the success of "Irène." "This was the only news," adds the secretary, "which he had from the court, except from the Duke of Orleans, who invited him twice to his private theatre."

"They wish," said the poet, "to stifle me under roses."

It was Wagnière's conviction that these scenes did not make upon his mind the impression that his friends supposed. "On the contrary," he says, "when I spoke to him of them, and expressed my surprise [at his indifference], he replied to me, 'Ah, my friend, you do not know the French; they did as much for the Genevan Jean-Jacques. Several persons even gave a crown to some porters for the privilege of mounting upon their shoulders to see him pass. Afterwards an order was issued for his arrest, and he was obliged to fly!' So, also, when we went out to ride, and he saw the Parisians running after his carriage, he would fall into a bad humor, shorten the ride, and order the coachman to drive us back to the hotel."

His health still improved after he recovered from the fatigue of his triumph at the theatre. Again he was the man of the world, the Parisian, the distinguished author; again he complied gayly and gracefully with whatever his vocation or his celebrity demanded of him. With peculiar ceremonial, accompanied by excellent music, he was admitted, in his character of defender of the friendless, to the order of Freemasons. One evening in April, John Adams, the newly arrived plenipotentiary from the United States, saw him at the theatre, when the play was his own "Alzire." Mr. Adams was in the next box, and saw him to advantage. "Between acts," he records, "the audience called out Voltaire, and clapped and applauded him the whole time. The old poet arose, and bowed respectfully to the audience. He has yet much fire in his eyes and vigor in his countenance, although very old."[1] The scene was indeed only less remarkable than the triumph of the previous month, the applause and acclamations continuing "three quarters of an hour." The admirable performance, too, of a stock piece by actors long used to their parts gave him the most exquisite pleasure, which he testified in his usual emphatic, irrepressible way.

[1] 3 Works of John Adams, 144.

A few days after, Mr. Adams was present on a still more interesting occasion. Voltaire was engaged to attend a session of the Academy of Sciences, of which he was not a member. Dr. Franklin, an honorary member, was also to attend, and the session was expected to be of unexampled interest. The old man felt so strong that morning that he went on foot to the hall, pressing his way through a respectful crowd of admirers. A ludicrous incident occurred on the way. A woman who kept a bookstall pushed through the throng, eating a piece of bread, and said to him confidentially, "My good M. de Voltaire, write some books for me, and my fortune will be made immediately; you have done it for so many other people. Oh, my good sir, please write me some books! I am a poor woman."

Passers-by, seeing the crowd, asked one another what was the cause of it. "It is M. de Voltaire," said some; "he who saved the families of Calas and Sirven." So reports Wagnière.

At the hall of the Academy all was effusion and enthusiasm. As Mr. Adams records in his Diary, there arose a general cry in the assembly that Voltaire and Franklin should be introduced. This was done; they bowed and spoke to each other. But the audience, not satisfied, clamored for something more. Then they shook hands. But the outcry continued, until, at last, words were distinguished: "*Embrace in the French manner!*" The philosopher and the poet embraced and kissed each other's cheeks. The tumult then subsided, and, as Mr. Adams observes, "the cry immediately spread through the whole kingdom, 'How charming it was to see Solon and Sophocles embrace!'"[1]

With all this, he was soon in the full tide of literary work: amending "Irène," proceeding with "Agathocle," correcting old comedies, commenting upon (as D'Alembert mentions) the Prophecies of Daniel, and laying out work for the Academy, over which he was now to preside; toiling with all the vivacity of his prime, as though the best of his career lay still before him. His new tragedy, "Agathocle," he relied upon to efface the recollection of "Irène's" imperfect success. As late as April 20th, we see him writing to D'Argental upon that unfinished drama precisely in the tone and manner of forty years before,

[1] 3 Works of John Adams, 147.

when he had a "Mérope," a "Zaïre," or an "Alzire" upon his hands.

"I believe," he wrote April 20th, "that La Rive and Molé will play well the children of Agathocle, that Idasan suits Monvel very well, that the white locks and the voice of Brizart will suffice for Agathoole, and that the role of Idace is much more in the character of Madame Vestris than that of Irène, provided she will lessen the enormous multitude of her gestures. In a word, it seems to me that 'Agathocle' will be much better played than 'Irène;' with which 'Irène' I am very cruelly dissatisfied. I throw myself into the arms of my dear angel for my consolation. I ask only two representations of 'Irène' at the reopening of the theatre (after Lent), in order to equal the glory of M. Barthe. I must start in fifteen days, without which all perishes at Ferney. I hope in the month of September to go out no more from under the wings of my angel."

Yes; he had yielded to the party of his friends who claimed him for Paris. Those triumphal scenes at the theatre, at the two Academies, and in the streets, whatever philosophy might say of them, could not but influence, and even, at times, deceive and bewilder, the most susceptible of human beings, now past eighty-three, and not yet recovered from a severe malady. Nor could they fail to strengthen the argument of those who were urging him to remain. What was there for him now at Ferney? Belle-et-Bonne, married to a spoiled child of Paris, could henceforth be only an occasional visitor there; and his niece, torn from everything she loved and liked, would be an uncomfortable companion in a country house. His desire to return home was very strong; but, after his coronation at the theatre, he wavered more and more. He would, and he would not. The old man longed for the quiet and repose of his home, but the poet, the artist, the Academician, the man of the world, the lord of opinion, leaned toward his metropolis; and all who surrounded him seem to have been eager for his stay, except Wagnière, D'Alembert, Dr. Tronchin, and Dupuits. The Paris party, as Wagnière reports, endeavored to convince him that his Ferney watchmakers would be ungrateful to their benefactor, and loved him not.

"But [says the secretary], when his own coachman came from Fer-

ney to Paris, he brought with him a beautiful dog of mine that M. de Voltaire was very fond of. This dog, on arriving at Paris, made him astonishing caresses. In the evening he had him up-stairs, and the animal, on entering, ran up to him and caressed him. 'Well,' said he, 'you see, however, that I am still beloved at Ferney.' At the same time the tears rolled from his eyes. From that moment the dog was not permitted to come into the house. Another proof of his desire to return, beside what he said to me, was a note which he wrote with his own hand to my wife, March 26th, conceived in these terms: —

"'My dear Madame Wagnière, — Your letter has touched me sensibly. I thank you for all your pains. I have had two mortal maladies at eighty-four, and I hope, nevertheless, to see you again at Easter (April 18). I embrace you with all my heart, — you and Mimi. Voltaire.'

"These advisers succeeded one another. When he appeared shaken, they were at the summit of joy. Two hours after, he would persist in wishing to set out; when all the cabal would come together, and hold frequent counsel to devise the means of retaining him. I was alone against them all in soliciting him to go home. They perceived that it was I who supported him in his wish to return to his tranquil retreat, and they resolved at any cost to separate me from this worthy old man, who had reared me, and been as a father to me, and to whom I had been attached so long. M. Tronchin alone had the courageous friendship to speak to him with truth. He said to him these very words: 'I would give at this moment a hundred louis to get you to Ferney. You have too much intelligence not to feel that a tree eighty-four years old is not transplanted unless it is desired to kill it. Start in eight days; I have an excellent traveling-carriage in readiness at your service.' 'Am I in a condition to set out?' asked M. de Voltaire. 'Yes; I answer for it with my head,' replied M. Tronchin. M. de Voltaire took his hand, and said to him, 'My friend, you give me back my life.' He was so moved that his cook, who was present, was obliged, as well as myself, to go out of the room to hide our feelings.

"A moment after, M. Dupuits, husband of Marie Corneille, came to see him, who spoke to him with the same frankness as M. Tronchin, and with the same friendship. M. de Voltaire begged him to go and see the traveling-carriage of which M. Tronchin had spoken. It was then that he ordered me to write to Ferney for his coachman to come instantly, with his own carriage. Madame Denis, having heard of this conversation with M. Tronchin, scolded him much for it, and never forgave him. The more this old man showed a desire to leave,

the more they redoubled their efforts to retain him. They told him that he had only to send me to Ferney, as I knew his affairs as well as he did himself. 'Yes,' said he, 'I know that Wagnière is an honest man; he is my consolation, and I regard him as my brother; but it is absolutely necessary that I should return.' 'Why, uncle?' 'Because I adore the country; because it preserves my life. Remain here to amuse yourself, you who detest the country.' 'Who told you that, uncle?' 'My experience,' he replied. He spoke with great vivacity and a severe tone. She consented to remain at Paris, and left the room in despair.

"Nevertheless, reflecting that it would not be becoming in her thus to abandon, for her own pleasure, this great man, to whom she owed everything, and that she would doubtless be obliged immediately to rejoin him, she and her friends again proposed to him to procure a country-house near Paris, or in Paris itself. Several were suggested to him, and, at last, a very pretty one in the Rue de Richelieu, of which there were yet constructed only the walls and a grand staircase. It pleased him; he wished to have it finished, so that his niece could live there."

A kind of compromise had been made between his niece and himself, as also between the old man and the celebrated author. He agreed to buy the house in the Rue de Richelieu for his own life and that of his niece, with the intention to live in it eight months of the year, and to pass the four summer months at Ferney. Meanwhile, he would return to Ferney for a few weeks, and had fixed the day for his departure. According to Wagnière, who regarded this arrangement with extreme repugnance, the scheme was defeated by a stratagem of the Denis party. An influential friend of the lady wrote her a note, warning her that, if her uncle should return to his château, the court was prepared to issue an order forbidding forever his return to Paris. "I have held in my hand," says Wagnière, "this infernal note, filled with the most horrible falsehood, which I found crumpled in the ashes of the fireplace in Madame Denis's room, and I call it my unfortunate master's sentence of death."

It is not so clear, however, that the warning was without foundation. On the contrary, it is highly probable that the hierarchy would have found means to prevent his return to Paris. The late events at the theatre and elsewhere had roused some of the popular preachers of Paris to renew their denun-

ciations of "philosophy" from the pulpit. The Abbé de Beauregard was still the preacher at Versailles, — he who had of late distinguished himself above all others by his glowing vituperation in the cathedral of Notre Dame.

"Yes!" cried he, in one of his most celebrated sermons of this period, — "yes! it is against kings and against religion that the philosophers direct their blows! The hatchet and the hammer are in their hands; they await but the favorable moment to overturn the throne and the altar. Yes! thy temples, Lord, will be despoiled and destroyed, thy festivals abolished, thy name blasphemed, thy worship proscribed, and thy ministers massacred! But what do I hear? Great God, what do I see? Instead of the holy psalms, with which the sacred temples resound in thy honor, are heard songs shameful and profane. And you, infamous divinity of paganism, shameless Venus, you come here to take audaciously the place of the living God, to seat yourself upon the throne of the holy of holies, and receive the guilty incense of your new adorers!"

Such melodious inanity, uttered by a voice selected for its thrilling power from the whole priesthood of France, has its effect upon a compact mass of credulous and timid worshipers, under the lofty roof of a vast cathedral. This sermon was delivered at Notre Dame some time before Voltaire's return; but, on Palm Sunday, thirteen days after the crowning of the poet at the theatre, the same Abbé de Beauregard preached in the royal chapel at Versailles, when he made a pointed allusion to the coronation. Again he said, with equal art and vehemence, that the works of the philosophers were so many attacks upon God, kings, *and* morality, and tended to destroy all government *and* all belief. "Yet," said he, "these productions were imprudently allowed, and, instead of just repression, they bring to their authors CROWNS!" "We are accused of intolerance," said the abbé. "Ah! do they not know that charity has its furies, and zeal its revenges?"

The courtiers, we are assured, smiled at these foolish utterances, and Voltaire for the moment could parry the attack by a jest. "The Abbé de Beauregard," said he, "would gladly refuse to bury me, which is very unjust, for it is said that I would ask nothing better than to bury *him;* and I think he owes me the same politeness." This made "Paris" laugh, as

it went the rounds of the supper-tables; but the priest not the less had the ear of the people, and the king, ignorant and timid, was one of the people.

Alarmed by these intimations from the court, which were confirmed by the Duke de Praslin in conversation, Voltaire decided to remain for the present at Paris, and send Wagnière to Ferney to gather up his papers, and bring him the books requisite for his various literary projects. It was long before he could communicate this intention to his secretary, and did it at last with sobs and tears.

"On the following day [continues Wagnière] he gave me all his orders in writing, and a power of attorney to act for him, and I had my place taken in the Lyons diligence, where I was to get some money to send him. April 29th, I being alone with him, he turned sadly towards me, stretched out his arms, and said, 'My friend, it is, then, the day after to-morrow that we are to separate! That has not happened to us before in twenty-four years. I count upon your friendship and your prompt return.' He cried like a child while saying these words, and I was moved not less. The next day, at five o'clock in the afternoon, he went with Madame Denis to his notary's to sign the contract for the acquisition of the house in the Rue de Richelieu. He remained only half an hour, and left his niece there. On alighting from his carriage, he threw himself upon me like a desperate man who has the presentiment of a great misfortune. He said to me, 'Ah, my friend, I have just bought a house, and I have acquired only my tomb!' Having ascended to his chamber, he threw himself into an arm-chair apparently overwhelmed with the acutest grief. He told me that he wished to go with me himself at midnight to the starting-place of the diligence. I opposed this resolution with all my force, and soon after he fell asleep. I went out to finish packing. He slept till half past ten in the evening, when he rang, and, supposing that I had gone to bed, he sent his cook to say good-by, and to wish me a pleasant journey and a quick return. I entered at that moment, and threw myself into his arms. He held me a long time in his embrace, without either of us being able to utter a word. At last I said to him, 'I hope, my dear master, soon to see you again in good health.' He replied, 'Alas, my friend, I wish to live for the sake of seeing you again, and to die in your arms.' I then tore myself from him, and went away without being able to say anything more, so full was I of trouble and agitation.

"Such were the last words I heard pronounced by that great man, that extraordinary being, so virtuous and good, my dear master, my

father, my friend, whom a fatal destiny did not permit me to see again, and whom I mourn every day. I sent him at Lyons eighty thousand francs from his banker there, and twenty thousand from another source. I deposited also with his banker at Lyons sixteen hundred louis, which I found at Ferney."

Meanwhile, the patriarch had entered upon his three months' term of service as president or *directeur* of the French Academy. He presided on Monday, April 27th, when a conversation arose upon a translation of Pope's "Epistle to Arbuthnot," which the Abbé Delille, the translator, read that day to the Academy. Pope was a name he could never hear with indifference, and this translation revived all his interest in the English poet and his works. After complimenting the translation, he spoke of the comparative poverty of the French language, particularly for poets' use, and said that there was great need to enrich it with new words, as well as to retain all its happy and energetic phrases. "Why," said he, "should we not call an actor who plays tragic parts a *tragédien?* Our language is a proud beggar; it is necessary to give her alms against her will." He then proposed that the Academy should undertake the reconstruction of the French Dictionary, dividing the labor equitably among the members; each undertaking one letter of the alphabet, or more, and giving the whole to the public in the name and on the authority of the Academy. The dictionary then in use, he said, was inadequate, without interest, without dignity, without philosophy; it was a reproach to the Academy, which he regarded as the lawgiver of language to the French people. He spoke with a warmth and continuance which astonished every hearer, and alarmed his friends.

He made a strong impression upon his colleagues; but he found several of them indisposed to so serious a labor, and nothing was concluded at this session. Many members, indeed, had not the knowledge requisite for their share of such a work. An anecdote is related which illustrates the fact. When the learned Beauzée was admitted to the Academy, in 1772, a friend asked him by what miracle he had obtained the suffrages of a coterie of atheists. The new member replied, "I have just asked the same question of D'Alembert. Finding that I was almost the only one at our sessions who believed in

God, I said to D'Alembert one day, 'How came you to think of electing *me*, whom you knew to be so far from agreeing with you and your colleagues in opinion?' D'Alembert hesitated, and then answered, 'I don't wonder you ask. In truth, we needed a grammarian. We knew that you believed in God, but knowing also that you were a very good man, we thought of electing you, notwithstanding your want of a philosophy which could complete your excellent character.'"

The zeal of Voltaire proved, however, to be irresistible. At the meeting of the 7th of May he produced in his own handwriting a scheme of a dictionary, such as has been followed in all the great works of that nature since executed in Europe and America. The following was his plan: —

"It has been unanimously resolved, that we shall labor without delay upon a new dictionary, which shall contain, —

"The recognized etymology of each word, and, sometimes, the probable etymology;

"The conjugation of the irregular verbs, which are little in use;

"The various significations of each term, with the examples drawn from the most approved authors, as, *Il lui fut donné de prevaloir contre les rois. Cette île plus orageuse que la mer qui l'environne. Point de campagne où la main diligente du laboureur ne fut imprimée, etc.*;[1]

"All the picturesque and energetic expressions of Montaigne, of Amiot, of Charron, which it is desirable to revive, and upon which our neighbors have seized.

"By avoiding dullness upon each of those subjects, but treating suitably all of them, we can produce a work which will be as agreeable as it is necessary. It would be at once a grammar, a rhetoric, and a collection of poetry, without the ambition to pretend to it.

"Each Academician can undertake one letter of the alphabet, and even two.

"The Academy will examine the work of each of its members, and make in it the suitable changes, additions, and retrenchments.

"Mr. —— has undertaken the Letter A.
"Mr. —— " " " " B.
"Mr. —— " " " " C," etc.[2]

After recommending the plan with all his energy, he ob-

[1] It was given him to prevail against kings. That isle more stormy than the sea which surrounds it. No country where the diligent hand of the husbandman had not imprinted, etc.

[2] 2 Longchamp et Wagnière, 540.

tained for it a unanimous, if reluctant consent. This did not satisfy him. He insisted that they should divide at once among them the twenty-four letters of the alphabet, and undertook for his own part the letter A, as being the most laborious. An old member ventured to remind him of his age; but he rejected the intimation with something more than vivacity. After a long and exciting session, he succeeded upon every point, and had the satisfaction of seeing the letters both distributed and accepted. In the highest elation, he said to his colleagues, as he rose from his chair to take leave of them, "Gentlemen, I thank you in the name of the alphabet." To this the Chevalier de Chastellux happily replied, "And we thank you in the name of letters."

CHAPTER XLV.

DEATH.

His work was done. This generous scheme of a national dictionary, since so ably carried out in France, in the United States, and elsewhere, was not the least of his services to civilization, and it was his last.

He was aware that the Academy had given a languid consent to his project, and he could not quite avoid the reflection that a man of eighty-three was not certain to witness its completion. He therefore set about preparing an elaborate discourse upon the subject, to read to the Academy, that should convince the skeptical and rouse the lethargic; an essay which, by exhibiting all the charms and utilities of such a work, could prevent, in any case, its abandonment. In his literary career of sixty-five years he had put the French language to every strain of which it is capable, from epigram to tragedy, from the easiest narrative to the newest science; he knew it in its strength and its weakness, its wealth and its poverty; he knew it as no other man has ever known any language. He had a particular taste for the niceties and devices of human speech, and, like every good artist, loved the tools he worked with. He had a considerable familiarity with Latin, English, Italian, and Spanish, as well as some Greek and a little postilion's German. As to his mastery of French, a bird is not more at home in its feathers, nor a snake in its skin; his French is limpid, lucid perfection.

Hence, when he sat down to get upon paper the thousand things that came rushing into his mind upon language (in the absence, too, of his familiar, helpful Wagnière), the day was not long enough, and his strength was gone before he had appeased his craving to accomplish. He resorted then to the most destructive of all stimulants to jaded nerves, — a stimulant more deadly than alcohol to a spent student. In the

course of a long evening, following a day of toil, he drank much coffee. He kept at his task until late at night, and drank in all "ten or twelve cups of coffee." When, at last, he went to bed, he could not sleep, and he never again enjoyed a sleep that was natural. The coffee aggravated his *strangurie*, which gave him at times acute pain, and induced a feverish condition. This was toward the middle of May. The special session of the Academy, appointed to arrange further details of the new scheme, was postponed on account of his indisposition, and again postponed. He was still able to get about, and even to walk out, no one supposing that his symptoms were of a serious nature. Had he not been an invalid always? Had he not at eighty-three recovered from a broken blood-vessel?

His pen was not yet quite at rest. His last epigram was probably written just after this attack. His former guest and *protégé*, Grétry, had produced his opera of "Midas" first at court, where it failed; and three weeks after, in May, 1778, it was performed at Paris, where it succeeded. Upon this, Voltaire wrote: —

"La cour a dénigré tes chants,
Dont Paris a dit des marveilles.
Hélas! les oreilles des grands
Sont souvent de grandes oreilles."[1]

His poetic response to the verses of the Abbé Attaignant bears date May 16th, which was four or five days after his excess with coffee. These are certainly the last verses he ever composed: —

TO THE ABBÉ DE L'ATTAIGNANT.

Paris, May 16, 1778.

L'Attaignant chanta les belles;
Il trouva peu de cruelles,
Car il sut plaire comme elles.
Aujourd'hui plus généreux,
Il fait de chansons nouvelles
Pour un vieillard malheureux.

Je supporte avec constance
Ma longue et triste souffrance,
Sans l'erreur de l'espérance;

[1] The court has reviled thy songs, of which Paris has said marvelous things. Alas! the ears of the great are often long ears.

Mais vos vers m'ont consolé ;
C'est la seul jouissance
De mon esprit accablé.[1]

He added in prose, "I can go no further, monsieur. M. Tronchin, witness of the wretched condition in which I am, would find it too strange that I should reply in bad verses to your charming couplets. The mind, moreover, is affected too much by the torments of the body; but the heart of old Voltaire is full of your goodness."

Dr. Tronchin had not been summoned at first; partly, perhaps, because the patient was ashamed to face a physician whose prescriptions and whose known system he had so flagrantly violated. One day, while he was suffering extreme pain, the Duke de Richelieu mentioned that he had himself experienced relief from the anguish of the gout by taking an elixir of which laudanum was the chief ingredient. He procured something of the kind; and, as was all but inevitable, he took too much of it, and thus brought on one of the most distressing conditions of the body. Our physicians familiarly call this "the opium sickness;" the chief symptom of which is the most miserable nausea, that destroys appetite, prevents the patient from taking his pain-quelling elixir, and reduces him to despair. It is impossible to overstate the desolating misery of this malady in such a case as this, where there is a grinding pain latent in the body, certain to awake and resume the torments of the patient the moment his opiate begins to lose its power. At that period, too, the preparations of opium were cruder than the crudest now in use; and it appears that the elixir first taken by the sufferer was bought at hazard at an apothecary's.

When, therefore, Dr. Tronchin was at length summoned, he found his patient in a deplorable condition both of body and mind. He was bitterly ashamed of what he had done. He could not forgive himself, nor patiently endure the consequences of his imprudence. He was passionately contrite. He could not apologize enough to this hard, cold, uncompromising

[1] L'Attaignant sang the belles. He found few cruel, for he knew how to please, like them. To-day, more generous, he writes new songs for an unhappy old man. I support with constancy my long and sad sufferings without the delusion of hope; but your verses have consoled me; it is the only enjoyment of my overwhelmed spirit.

Swiss physician for giving him so much needless trouble; he owned again and again that if he had followed his advice all had been well with him. In Paris there could scarcely have been found a person less capable than Dr. Tronchin of pardoning the admirable folly of this gifted man, whose very madness was wiser than Tronchinian wisdom. The doctor wrote, a few weeks after, to a friend in Geneva, a brief, unsympathizing account of these scenes: —

"I always spoke the truth to him, and, unfortunately for him, I was the only one who never deceived him. 'Yes, my friend,' he often said to me, 'you alone have given me good advice. If I had followed it I should not be in the frightful condition in which I am; I should have returned to Ferney; I should not have inhaled the intoxicating fumes that turned my head. Yes, I swallowed nothing but smoke. You can be of no more use to me; send me the madmen's doctor. By what fatality did I come to Paris? You told me when I arrived that an oak eighty-four years old could not be transplanted, and you spoke the truth. Why did I not believe you? And when I gave you my word of honor that I would set out in the carriage which you procured for me, why did I not go? Have pity on me; I am mad [*fou*].' He had intended to leave the next day but one after the follies of his coronation at the Comédie-Française; but he received a deputation from the French Academy, who entreated him, before he left Paris, to honor the Academy with his presence. . . . . From that moment his days were only a whirlwind of follies. He was ashamed of them. When he saw me he asked my pardon; he clasped my hands; he prayed me to pity him, and not abandon him, especially because he had to make new efforts in order to respond to the honor which the Academy had done him in engaging him to labor upon a new dictionary. The making of this dictionary was his last dominant idea, his last passion. He had taken upon himself the letter A, and had distributed the twenty-three others among twenty-three Academicians; several of whom, by accepting unwillingly, had singularly irritated him. 'They are sluggards,' he would say, 'accustomed to wallow in idleness; but I will make them march!' And it was in the effort to make them march, during the interval between the two sessions, that he took at hap-hazard so many drugs, and committed all the follies that hastened his death and threw him into the most frightful state of despair and madness." [1]

Days passed. There could be no material change for the

[1] Tronchin to Bonnet. Manuscript letters in Library of Geneva. Quoted by G. Desnoiresterres in Voltaire, son Retour et sa Mort, page 365.

better, for he could take no nourishment; but, as he grew weaker, he became quieter, and had short intervals of ease and reason. May 25th, Nephew d'Hornoy, in writing to Wagnière to urge his instant return, described his condition: "The effect of the opium is passed; but it has left cruel symptoms. The debility is extreme; he has a fearful repugnance to whatever could sustain and restore him; he will not even take broth. All that we can do, by entreaties, by supplications, and even by alarming him upon his condition, is to make him swallow some spoonfuls of jelly and blanc-mange. So his feebleness increases, and it is frightful. He desires you intensely. I do so not less. He charges me to write to you, to entreat you to return."

The next day, May 26th, the Abbé d'Hornoy wrote again for Wagnière, addressing his letter to the secretary's wife: "The weakness increases from day to day. The impossibility of making my unhappy uncle take nourishment still continues. It would be to deceive ourselves to hope any more. . . . . What remains to him of head is spent in desiring you."

On this day he had a gleam of reason and a brief return of mental power. For a few minutes, we may even say, he was himself again. He received a letter from the son of that General de Lally who was beheaded twelve years before for alleged treason in India. The young Count de Lally, with Voltaire's tireless, skillful aid, had spent laborious years in vindicating his father's memory, and in getting the foul decree annulled which had condemned a faithful soldier to a traitor's death. This day, May 26, 1778, saw his pious efforts crowned with the most complete success; and he sent word instantly to the Rue de Beaune that the king in council had broken the decree, thus transferring the odium of it from the victim to the judges, and restoring to all its purity and lustre his father's name. The glad tidings awoke the invalid's dormant intelligence. He sat up in bed; the old light shone again in his eyes; and he dictated a few lines to the count, which proved to be the last he ever composed: —

"May 26th. The dying man revives on learning this great news; he embraces very tenderly M. de Lally; he sees that the king is the defender of justice; he will die content."

He then, as La Harpe records, told some one to write the

news in large hand upon a piece of paper, and pin it to the tapestry in a conspicuous place, so that every one coming in could see it. The paper read thus: —

"On the 26th of May the judicial assassination, committed by Pasquier (counselor to the parliament) upon the person of Lally, was avenged by the king's council." [1]

He soon relapsed, and during the following days he lay quiet, and appeared to suffer little pain. He recognized some of his old friends when they came near his bedside or spoke to him. "I visited him when he was in this condition," says D'Alembert, "and he always knew me. He even used some expressions of friendship; but, immediately after, would fall again into his stupor, for he was in a continual slumber. He awoke only to complain, and to say that he had come to Paris to die."

Two days after the incident of the Count de Lally, the Abbé Mignot, who was a considerable personage, a member of the Grand Council, as well as the titular and beneficed head of an abbey, called upon the curé of Saint-Sulpice, and explained to him his uncle's condition. With regard to what followed, the best authority is the narrative drawn up by D'Alembert for the information of the King of Prussia, — a narrative which is confirmed by all the eye-witnesses who placed their observations on record.

"The curé of Saint-Sulpice replied to the Abbé Mignot that, since M. de Voltaire had lost his recollection, it was useless to visit him. The curé declared, however, that if M. de Voltaire did not make a public, solemn, and most circumstantial reparation of the scandal he had caused he could not in conscience bury him in holy ground. In vain the nephew replied that his uncle, while he still enjoyed the possession of all his faculties, had made a profession of faith, which the curé himself had recognized as authentic; that he had always disavowed the works imputed to him; that he had, nevertheless, carried his docility for the ministers of the church so far as to declare that, if he had caused any scandal, he asked pardon for it. The curé replied that that did not suffice; that M. de Voltaire was notoriously the declared enemy of religion; and that he could not, without compromising himself with the clergy and with the archbishop, accord to him ecclesiastical burial. The Abbé Mignot threatened to apply to the parliament

[1] 2 Correspondance Littéraire de La Harpe, 242.

for justice, which he hoped to obtain with the authentic documents he had in his possession. The curé, who felt that he was supported by authority, told him that he could do as he pleased.

. . . . "On Saturday, May 30th, the day of his death, some hours before that fatal moment, the Abbé Gaultier again offered his services, in a letter which he wrote to the Abbé Mignot; who went at once in quest of the Abbé Gaultier and the curé of Saint-Sulpice. The curé approached the sick man, and pronounced in his hearing the words *Jesus Christ*. At these words M. de Voltaire, who was still in a stupor, opened his eyes, and made a gesture with his hand, as if to send the curé away, and said, 'Let me die in peace.' The curé, more moderate on this occasion and more reasonable than usual with him, turned toward those who were present, and said, 'You see plainly, gentlemen, that he has not his head.'

"At that moment, however, he had complete possession of his reason; but the persons present, as you may well believe, sire, took no pains to contradict the curé. That pitiful parson [*capelan*] then retired from the chamber, and, in the conversation which he held with the family, he was so maladroit as to betray himself, and to prove clearly that all his conduct was an affair of vanity. He told them that they had done very ill to summon the Abbé Gaultier, who had spoiled everything; that they should have addressed themselves to him alone, the parish priest of the sick man; that he would have seen him in private and without witnesses; and that he would have arranged everything."[1]

The Abbé Gaultier's narrative does not materially differ from that of D'Alembert.

Belle-et-Bonne, who never left his bedside during these last days, said to Lady Morgan in Paris, forty years afterwards, as she did to every one with whom she ever conversed on the subject, "To his last moment everything he said and did breathed the benevolence and goodness of his character; all announced in him tranquillity, peace, resignation, except a little movement of ill-humor which he showed to the curé of Saint-Sulpice, when he begged him to withdraw, and said, 'Let me die in peace.'"

He lingered until late in the evening. Ten minutes before he breathed his last, he roused from his slumber, took the hand of his valet, pressed it, and said to him, "Adieu, my dear Morand; I am dying." These were his last words. He died

[1] 25 Œuvres de Frédéric le Grand, 106.

peacefully and without pain, at a quarter past eleven, on Saturday evening, May 30, 1778, aged eighty-three years, six months, and nine days. This last incident Wagnière reports upon the authority of Morand, who was watching with his master that night. The body was embalmed the next morning. "The surgeons who performed that operation," adds the secretary, "assured me that they never saw a man better constituted than he was; and thus he could struggle three weeks against maladies that would have killed other men in a few days." It was their opinion that he might have lived and labored for several years longer, and perhaps equaled the century of Fontenelle, but for the excitements of the last three months.

His contrition, therefore, which seemed to his friends excessive, was not so unreasonable. He judged himself correctly. He, who had so many reasons to live, — his colony, his farms, his works, his *work;* he who had long known the secret of happy living, and to whom every hour and every task brought its peculiar joy, — he had thrown away, through his impatience, several years of life! He could not forgive himself. Moreover, he had left one imperative and sacred duty imperfectly done, — that of making adequate provision for Wagnière, — and this added another pang to his last days. "He spoke to me often," says the secretary, "of his will; he told me that at his death he wished me to have twenty thousand crowns [sixty thousand francs], including the eight thousand francs left me in his will. He said that he would complete the amount by notes payable to my order, which notes, in fact, I received from him; but, through an excess of delicacy, I was unwilling to keep them, and begged him to take them back. Then, when he sent me to Ferney, he ordered me to deposit with his banker at Lyons fifty-two thousand livres, which would be one day at my disposal, upon his orders. Unfortunately, I could not be near him when he died, despite his entreaties, and his notary also was not allowed to approach him, though he did not cease to ask for him. Hence, the impossibility of his executing his good intentions toward me."

CHAPTER XLVI.

BURIAL.

It was Sunday morning, the last day of May, 1778. Voltaire lay dead in the house of Villette, on the bank of the Seine, not far from the spot on which he was born, in 1694. The family had concealed from the public the severity of his illness, and now, on this Sunday morning, concealed more carefully that he was dead. It had been an anxious question with them what they should do with his mortal remains. Already they had taken legal advice as to the right of the church to exclude them from the only burial-places in France, those under the control of ecclesiastics. The lawyers were against their contesting the point, and naturally they shrank from such a struggle. Nor did the case admit of delay, for the summer was upon them.

The Abbé Mignot, on applying to the curé of Saint-Sulpice, could obtain from him only this concession: "I consent that the body of M. de Voltaire be carried away without ceremony, and I relinquish to that end all curial rights." From the Abbé Gaultier he procured this: "I certify, to whomsoever it may concern, that, upon the requisition of M. de Voltaire, I went to him, and found him not in a state to be heard in confession." As it was supposed to be the intention of the relations to convey the body to Ferney, orders thrice repeated were dispatched to the bishop of that diocese to forbid the curé of the village to admit the corpse to the tomb prepared for it, or to perform over it the usual rites. But it was not the intention of the family to attempt to carry the corpse so far.

Early on Sunday morning, the Abbé Mignot, carrying with him these two certificates and the confession of faith made by his uncle several weeks before, left Paris in a post-chaise, and rode at full speed toward the village of Romilli-on-the-Seine, in Champagne, about one hundred and ten miles from Paris,

and made such good time that he arrived there at half past seven in the evening. At this place was the Abbey of Scellières, from which he drew his ecclesiastical title and revenue, and near which he had an official residence. He said to the prior that he had had the misfortune to lose his uncle, who in his last moments had expressed a desire to be buried at Ferney. This being impossible, the family wished the body to be deposited in the vault under the church near the abbey, and it was already on the way. The abbé exhibited his papers to the prior, who, knowing nothing of what had occurred at Paris, consented readily, and, indeed, without question or hesitation, to receive and bury the corpse.

Late in the evening of the same day, when the streets of Paris were silent and deserted, two carriages stood before the house of the Villettes, of which the foremost was drawn by six horses. In this vehicle was placed the body, uncoffined, wearing a dressing-gown, and the head covered with a large night-cap. It was placed in a reclining posture upon the seat, as if it were a night traveler asleep in his carriage. With the body rode a man-servant, who kept it in position. Six horses were probably employed to assist in conveying the impression that the carriage was that of a *grand seigneur*, who was sick, and riding rapidly to his country-seat. The other carriage contained M. d'Hornoy, grand-nephew, and two cousins of the deceased, these three being all of the poet's male relations who were within reach or knowledge. They traveled fast all the rest of the night, and the next day at noon drove into the court-yard of the abbey. The man who had ridden with the body descended half dead from the vehicle.

When the postilions were gone from the yard, and the servants of the abbey had been sent away, the corpse was removed to a basement room, which was then locked. The village undertaker provided an ordinary coffin of fir (*sapin*), and made all ready for the funeral. The worthy prior himself relates what followed: —

"In the afternoon [of June 1st] the Abbé Mignot, at the church door, made to me the solemn presentation of the body of his uncle, which had been prepared for burial. We sang the vespers for the dead; the body was watched all night in our choir, surrounded by torches. The morning of the next

day [June 2d], after five o'clock, all the ecclesiastics of the vicinity, of whom many are friends of the Abbé Mignot, having been formerly seminarists at Troyes [a few miles distant], performed the mass in presence of the body, and I celebrated high mass at eleven o'clock, before the interment, which took place before a numerous assembly. The family of M. de Voltaire set out on their return the next morning, satisfied with the honors rendered to his memory, and the prayers we had made to God for the repose of his soul."

An hour or two after the departure of the relations for Paris, the excellent prior was astounded to receive from his bishop a menacing letter forbidding the burial. "I have just learned, monsieur," wrote the Bishop of Troyes, June 2d, "that the family of M. de Voltaire, who died some days ago, have decided to transport his body to your abbey for interment, and this because the curé of Saint-Sulpice declared to them that he would not bury it in holy ground. I hope very much that you have not yet proceeded to that interment, which might have disagreeable consequences for you; and if, as I trust, the burial has not yet taken place you have only to declare that you cannot proceed in it without express orders from me."

The prior, much alarmed, replied immediately to the bishop. He related the circumstances, and added, —

"Allow me, monseigneur, although the houses of our order are not submitted to the jurisdiction of the *ordinaire*, to justify my conduct in the eyes of your grace; for, whatever may be the privileges of the order, its members ought always to pride themselves on respecting the episcopacy, and to do themselves honor by submitting their conduct, as well as their manners, to the examination of our lords the bishops. How could I suppose that they would refuse, that they could refuse, to M. de Voltaire the burial which was asked of me by his nephew, our lay abbot for twenty-three years, a magistrate for thirty years, an ecclesiastic who has lived much in this abbey, and who enjoyed great consideration in our order; also by a counselor of the parliament of Paris, grand-nephew of the deceased; by officers of a superior grade, all relatives and all worthy people? Under what pretext could I have believed that the curé of Saint-Sulpice had refused burial to M. de Voltaire, when that pastor had legalized with his own hand a profession of faith made by the deceased only two months ago, when he

wrote and signed a consent for the body to be transported without ceremony?"

There was a cry among the clergy for the expulsion of the prior from his order, and he felt it necessary to go to Paris in self-defense. It was only after much trouble and disturbance of mind that he overcame the "persecution" of his brethren, and could return safely to his abbey. It was also proposed to disinter the body; and it is certain there were members of the clerical body who were capable of sanctioning such an act. It was not done, however, and the body remained in the vault of the church in the village of Romilli-on-the-Seine. The place was indicated only by a small stone bearing the inscription, "Here lies Voltaire."

For some days the people of Paris knew nothing either of the burial or death of the poet, for the press received a positive order not to speak of him in any way whatever; and even the "Journal de Paris," which enjoyed a kind of monopoly of obituary notices, did not so much as mention the fact of his death! The actors of the national theatre, also, were ordered not to perform any piece of the deceased dramatist, and this prohibition remained in force for twenty-one days. The Academy, on learning the death of their most illustrious member, made the usual application to the Cordeliers for the customary service in his honor; but the archbishop (Beaumont), in anticipation of the request, had ordered those fathers to refuse it.

All at once, therefore, the topic of the season seemed annihilated. The gazettes, which had chronicled his movements, his retorts, his compliments, in every issue for many weeks, mentioned not his name; "Irène," "Nanine," "Alzire," were announced no more on the play-bills; and it was as though no such person as Voltaire had lived or died.

The reader, however, is aware that this *régime* was a despotism tempered by epigrams, and that the epigrammatists, as a body, had now come over to the side of Voltaire. On the door of the Academy were found written the first words of Racine's "Mithridate:"—

> "On nous faisait, Arbate, un fidèle rapport;
> Rome, en effet, triomphe." [1]

[1] A faithful report was made to you, Arbates; Rome, in effect, triumphs.

The unknown inscriber might have finished the line with a slight change: *Car Mithridate est mort.* At the next session of the Academy, the poet Le Brun handed about the room (which was equivalent to handing it about Paris) the following: —

"Celui que dans Athène eût adoré la Grèce,
Que dans Rome à sa table Auguste eût fait asseoir,
Nos Césars d'aujourd'hui n'ont pas voulu le voir,
Et Monsieur de Beaumont lui refuse une messe."[1]

There was a Latin epitaph launched, to this effect: "Here rests among monks he who against monks never rested." Another epigram was of this purport: "Yes, you are right, Monsieur de Saint-Sulpice. And why bury him? Is he not immortal? To this great man, doubtless, can justly be refused a tomb, but not an altar." Another ended thus: "He died consumed by the fire of his own genius. Nothing was wanting to his glory: priests cursed and kings loved him." There were some epigrams on the other side; there was also a vast silent public opinion in devoted sympathy with Messieurs de Saint-Sulpice and de Beaumont. One couplet was easily remembered:

"Admirez d'Arouet la plaisante planette:
Il naquit chez Ninon, et mourut chez Villette."[2]

This epitaph also is preserved: —

"Ci-gît l'enfant gâté du monde qu'il gâte."[3]

The pious multitude, timid, ignorant, and thoughtless, felt with young Mozart, who was then giving concerts in Paris and producing immortal symphonies, with most precarious and slender results to himself. Baron Grimm was aiding and advising him; and, if Voltaire had lived, the child of genius might have been spared the cruel mortifications he was destined to experience, and not have died in debt and misery, while every capital in Europe was enriched and exalted by his works, and while life, through him, was made to every susceptible soul

[1] Him whom in Athens Greece had adored, whom in Rome Augustus had placed at his table, our Cæsars of to-day have not wished to see, and Monsieur de Beaumont refuses him a mass.

[2] Admire the pleasant destiny of Arouet: he was born in the house of Ninon, and died in that of Villette.

[3] Here lies the spoiled child of the world which he spoiled.

in Christendom a more precious boon. Poor Mozart wrote to his father, in one of his long, rambling letters of this time, "The moment the symphony was over, I went off, in my joy, to the Palais-Royal, where I took a good ice, told over my beads, as I had vowed, and went home, where I am always happiest. . . . . I must give you a piece of intelligence, that you perhaps already know: namely, that the ungodly, arch-villain, Voltaire, has died miserably, like a dog,— just like a brute. That is his reward!" This was written July 3, 1778, when the clergy had had a whole month to work in; and thus, we may be sure, spoke all the simple, fearful souls, of high or low degree, who owned their sway.

But this was not the verdict of the world above and beyond their domain. When it was noised abroad over Europe that it had been necessary to convey the body of the patriarch of literature by stealth and in the night from his native city, and to procure by stratagem a decent burial for it, the narrative roused the deepest indignation, which soon found utterance. Frederic of Prussia read the details in the long letter of D'Alembert quoted above. Busied as he was with important and menacing complications, he set about preparing with his own hand a formal eulogium of the poet. Since the death of Maupertuis, he had been the president of his own Academy. November 26, 1778, the Berlin Academy met in special session to commemorate the death of Voltaire, to which all that was most distinguished and eminent in Prussia was invited. The king delivered the eulogium, of more than an hour's duration, which is published in his works.[1] It consisted chiefly of an outline of the deceased author's life, and comments upon some of his writings; a task which Frederic executed, as the Duke de Villars played tragedy, "like a duke and peer." There are errors of fact in the address, and errors of judgment; but when the king came to speak of the surreptitious burial, he laid about him like a man, rather than like a king. He poured burning contempt upon "the imbecile priests," who had sent expresses over the kingdom to insure dishonor to the remains of a great man. And yet, said he, "we could pardon their brutal stupidity, if their perverse reasoning did not disturb the repose of private citizens." He drew a contrast between the humane

[1] 7 Œuvres, 50.

morality which reigns in the works of Voltaire and the conduct of "the vile and contemptible beings" who had made his life a ceaseless struggle. The king continued: —

"Not content with giving moral precepts, he preached beneficence by his example. It was he whose courageous support came to the succor of the unfortunate family of Calas; who pleaded the cause of the Sirvens, and snatched them from the barbarous hands of their judges. He would have raised from the dead the Chevalier de la Barre if he had had the gift of miracles. It is noble in a philosopher, from the bosom of his retreat, to lift his voice and the voice of mankind, of which he is the organ, and force judges to reverse iniquitous sentences. If M. de Voltaire had possessed but this single trait, he would deserve to be placed among the small number of the true benefactors of humanity. Philosophy and religion teach in concert the ways of virtue. Tell me which is the more Christian: the magistrate who cruelly forces a family to fly their country, or the philosopher who gives it a home and protection; the judge who uses the sword of the law to assassinate a rash young man, or the sage who wishes to save his life in order to reform him; the executioner of Calas, or the saviour of his stricken family. These, gentlemen, are the actions which will render the memory of M. de Voltaire forever dear to those who are endowed with a feeling heart and a susceptible mind. However precious may be the gifts of the intellect and of the imagination, the lofty flights of genius and the vast accumulations of knowledge, those qualities, though nature bestows them but rarely, never rank higher than acts of humanity and beneficence. The former we admire; the latter we bless and venerate."

Such passages had the greater effect upon the audience from the fact that young D'Etallonde, the companion of the Chevalier de la Barre, was present on the occasion, and in sight of a portion of the audience. The king concluded his oration with another burst of fury against the priests who had denied him burial: —

"What! [cried he] in the eighteenth century, when the light of knowledge is more spread abroad than ever before, when the philosophic spirit has made so much progress, there are still to be found pontiffs more barbarous than Hercules, fitter to live with the people of Ceylon than in the midst of the French nation! Blinded by a false zeal, drunk with fanaticism, they prevent the last duties of humanity from being paid to one of the most famous men France has ever produced. The best destiny they can look for is that they and their vile

artifices will remain forever buried in the darkness of oblivion, while the fame of Voltaire will increase from age to age, and transmit his name to immortality!"

This was certainly very much in the style of a duke and peer; but it was the natural expression of an honest mind. All the vigilance of the police could not keep this oration out of France. Three months after its delivery, however, it was mentioned by Paris diarists as being "still very scarce." The King of Prussia did not stop here. As the clergy of France continued to mark their hostility, Frederic, at D'Alembert's suggestion, set on foot a series of truly Voltairean manœuvres, to induce the Catholic clergy of Berlin to hold a service in honor of the poet, whose pamphlet the king had once caused to be burnt by the hangman in a public square of his capital. Time, tact, and money were required to accomplish this, but it was done. The second anniversary of the author's death was the day of the solemnity, which was announced to Europe by an official paragraph in the Berlin Gazette of May 30, 1780: "To-day, at nine in the morning, in the Catholic church of this city, with all suitable pomp, was celebrated a solemn service for the soul of Messire Marie-Arouet de Voltaire. This service was besought by the Catholic Academicians of Berlin, and they obtained it of M. the Curé with the more facility, justice, and reason by producing authentic proofs that the late M. de Voltaire made before his death a profession of orthodox faith, that he had confessed, and edified Christian souls by considerable alms and other good works," etc.

The Empress Catherine of Russia expressed her sentiments in the universal language of deeds. She requested Baron Grimm to visit Madame Denis on her behalf, and make known her desire to buy the library and manuscripts of her uncle for transfer to St. Petersburg. Madame Denis consenting, the empress wrote to her a letter with her own hand, bearing this inscription, also written by herself: "*For Madame Denis, niece of a great man who loved me much.*" She assured her that she should regard as a precious trust "that library, which susceptible souls would never see without remembering that this great man knew how to inspire human beings with the universal benevolence which all his writings breathe, even those of pure diversion, because his own soul was profoundly affected with

it." The library proved to be a very miscellaneous collection of six thousand two hundred and ten volumes, for which the empress paid, as the receipt shows, which still exists, "135,-398 livres, 4 sous, 6 deniers tournois."

She invited Wagnière to come to Petersburg and arrange the books precisely in the manner in which they were placed at Ferney. The secretary went thither and arranged the books, accordingly. When all was ready the empress came to inspect his work. On entering the room she bowed low before a statue of Voltaire, and then, turning to Wagnière, said to him, "Monsieur, this is the man to whom I owe all that I know and all that I am." On learning that Wagnière was insufficiently provided for, she granted him a pension for his life of fifteen hundred francs per annum. Wagnière visited also the court of Frederic of Prussia, where he received from the king every mark of regard.

But all this homage of crowned heads paled before the series of tributes paid to the memory of Voltaire in his native Paris. The government could not long maintain the interdict upon the mention of his name. At a session of the Academy, in August, 1778, Secretary d'Alembert proposed Voltaire as the subject of the prize poem for the year following. He added these words: "And to augment, if possible, the ardor which men of letters will doubtless experience for a subject so interesting for them and for us, I take the liberty of offering myself the sum of six hundred livres, which, joined to the ordinary value of the prize, will form a gold medal of eleven hundred livres." The proposal was accepted with enthusiasm; but the Academy claimed the right of sharing the expense equally among themselves.

It was not until March, 1779, that occurred the installation of M. Ducis, the successor to Voltaire's chair in the Academy. Baron Grimm declares that no public meeting of the Academy ever attracted such a concourse, or created such an excitement. Two or three times the doors were forced, in spite of the guards, and several persons narrowly escaped suffocation. All the family of the deceased member were present, and Madame Denis wore the splendid furs and jewelry which the Empress Catherine had recently sent her. The eulogium pronounced by the new member escaped failure, and was occasion-

ally much applauded. But when, afterwards, one of the clerical members ventured to express the wish that "some friendly hand would retrench from the works of Voltaire everything adverse to religion, good morals, and the laws, and thus efface the spots which tarnish his glory," he was hissed without mercy. D'Alembert again presented himself as a benefactor to the Academy, though he was one of its least affluent members. He presented busts of Voltaire and Molière for the embellishment of the room, and remarked the points of resemblance between the late member and the immortal author of "Tartuffe."

A few days after, a little comedy was produced at the national theatre by La Harpe, called "The Rival Muses," which might have been suggested by a sentence in the King of Prussia's eulogium, where he repeats that Voltaire was "a whole Academy in himself." The piece turns upon the versatility of the author. Each of the Nine Sisters claims him for her own, finds reasons for the claim in his works, and contends for the honor of presenting him to Apollo. The comedy, which was in one act and in verse, would in any case have been successful; but it happened to be produced just as copies of the King of Prussia's eulogium were beginning to be secretly circulated in Paris, and when it was whispered about that the Archbishop of Paris was endeavoring to procure the suppression of the comedy. The little piece was therefore received with the greatest applause. A play, a book, a man, can become the flag of a party; and soldiers do not care to remark the spots upon the bunting of which their flag is composed.

A few weeks after, May 30, 1779, the anniversary of Voltaire's death, the actors of the national theatre, at the instance of D'Alembert, performed the tragedy of "Agathocle," left by the poet incomplete and uncorrected. For this solemnity D'Alembert wrote an address, which was spoken by the veteran Brizart, in which he recalled the touching spectacle of the old dramatic artist, faithful to his vocation of giving high delight to his countrymen almost to his last breath, "occupying himself with your pleasures at the moment when you were about to lose him forever."

CHAPTER XLVII.

TO THE PANTHEON.

For thirteen years the body of Voltaire remained in the vault of the village church in Champagne. All had then changed in France, or was swiftly changing. The Revolution was in full tide. June 1, 1791, the King of France, the same ill-starred Louis XVI., but then a king only in name, signed a decree of the National Assembly, which ordered that "the ashes of François-Marie Arouet de Voltaire be transferred from the Church of Romilli to that of Sainte-Geneviève in Paris," — the church that was to be styled thenceforth the Pantheon of France. It was at first intended to deposit the body in the Pantheon on the 4th of July following, a day as dear then to France as to America; but the intervening time was found too short, and the crowning ceremonial was of necessity postponed until July 10th.

The body was solemnly removed from the place where it had rested, and was placed upon an open funereal car, twenty feet high, adorned with oak leaves and laurel; and it began its long journey under the escort of the local officers and a detachment of the National Guard of the province. As the cortége advanced from village to village, and from town to town, it was joined temporarily by the mayors and their associate functionaries, as well as by files of citizen-soldiers, carrying at the ends of their muskets leaves of oak and branches of laurel. The procession, which changed every moment, passed through lines of spectators, who threw flowers upon the sarcophagus, and saluted it by presenting crowns. The villagers and peasants were then rejoicing in their first freedom from those feudal burdens, those complex vexations, which Voltaire had undermined by satire and argument, and they seemed to feel that it was to him they owed their deliverance. The people of rural France were enjoying, for the moment,

some of the substantial fruits of reasonable liberty, and no one yet foresaw the price they were to pay for it, — they, and their children, and their children's children! Aged peasants were seen to shed tears of grateful homage, and mothers of families lifted their little children above the heads of the crowd, that they, too, might see. Some persons brought out precious objects from their houses, which they made more precious by causing them to touch the sarcophagus. Some priests, too, restored to manhood by the Revolution, were observed to sympathize with and share the popular emotion.

During the night, the procession still held on its way, welcomed in every village by torches and lanterns, so that the road by which it was to pass seemed all lighted up in advance. In the day-time the towns disclosed triumphal arches, hung with garlands of flowers; and, with that classic taste that seems indigenous to France alone, dances arranged themselves spontaneously about the car, and young girls, clad in white, threw upon it jessamine, violets, and roses. At that time of year, it was said, nature herself had lavished upon the earth the three beautiful colors by which recreated France had symbolized the union of the three orders of the people.

The car itself was a beautiful object. The great structure was drawn by four horses caparisoned in violet, and covered with flowers. At each corner of the lofty platform was a pilaster of white marble, from which elegant hangings were suspended, and which sustained a canopy all fluttering with the three national colors. The sarcophagus was so placed that it appeared to be suspended from garlands of flowers; and round the outside of the car a gallery was constructed, from which seemed to grow poplars and cypress-trees. On the front of the car was written, "To the manes of Voltaire;" along one side, "If man is created free, he ought to govern himself;" upon the other, "If man has tyrants, he ought to dethrone them."

When the procession reached the gates of the capital, it was met by a numerous deputation of municipal officers, headed by the mayor; also by delegations from the principal patriotic clubs and literary societies. It was nearly dark when the cortége entered Paris, and it marched that night only as far as the site of the Bastille, not yet wholly removed. There, upon

the very spot where the tower had stood in which Voltaire had twice been confined, the architect Cellerier had constructed an altar out of the stones of the fallen edifice, covered with laurels and roses. Upon this the sarcophagus was placed. On the side of the altar was the inscription, — "Upon this spot, where despotism chained thee, Voltaire, receive the homage of a free people!"

"All Paris," says M. Dubois, the historian of these events, "went as if upon pilgrimage to pay their tributes of love and respect to him who, conveyed clandestinely from Paris in 1778, reëntered it after thirteen years of exile, avenged, adored, and triumphant." In the midst of the general acclamations, one cry not in harmony with the rest was heard: "*God, thou shalt be avenged!*" It was the voice, says the same writer, of "a fanatic priest, who, full of the souvenirs of 1572, had edged his way into the crowd, as formerly, in glorious Rome, some drunken porters mingled insults with the acclamations of the triumph."

All night the sarcophagus remained among the ruins of the Bastille. On Monday morning, clouds veiled the rising sun; it rained several times; but before noon the clouds broke away, the sun shone out warm and clear, making a beautiful afternoon for the procession through the city. Towards three o'clock, all being in readiness, the sarcophagus was placed upon the new car designed by David, and the cortége began to move toward the Pantheon. First marched a detachment of cavalry, a body of sappers, drummers, artillerymen, and some of the young National Guard. A group of citizens from distant places followed, carrying medallions of Voltaire, Rousseau, and Franklin, with the bust of Mirabeau in the centre, then only a few months dead. The workmen employed in demolishing the Bastille marched next, their chief, Talloy, carrying chains, bullets, armor, and other objects found in the Bastille. Another body of workmen bore the flag of the Bastille, and among them was seen the giantess who had made herself conspicuous in the attack on the building. Behind them marched citizens armed with pikes, surrounding one who carried upon the top of his pike a red cap. A model of the Bastille, made of its own stone, one of the eighty models designed for the departments of France, was carried in the procession by the Old French

Guard, wearing the uniform in which they had refused to fire upon their countrymen. The Jacobin Club was conspicuous, and the Hundred Swiss, and bodies of the National Guard. The academies, the actors, the society of artists, and indeed almost every organized body in the metropolis took part in the procession, or contributed a delegation to it.

Among the maxims and devices exhibited, the following were remarked, all taken from Voltaire's writings : —

"I have done a little good ; it is my best work."

"They have troubled the earth, and I have consoled it."

"If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him."

A striking object in the procession was the statue of Voltaire, modeled upon that of Houdon, gilt, crowned with laurels, carried by men dressed in Greek costume, and surrounded by pupils of the Academy of Painting and Sculpture, all dressed in the Greek manner.

The great car that bore the sarcophagus, a stupendous object indeed, announced itself from a long distance. It was preceded by a chorus of singers and a band of music, also clad in the Greek fashion, many carrying instruments of music of antique pattern. The car itself was the crowning marvel of the occasion. It was a vehicle of vast size and height, supported on four great wheels of bronze, and adorned in every part by allegorical figures and decorations from the designs of David. It presented the general appearance of a magnificent altar, covered with blue velvet sown with stars of gold, upon the summit of which was the sarcophagus, and upon that a full-length figure of Voltaire, half reclining, in an attitude of sleep, and covered with a purple cloth. Immortality, represented as a young girl, winged, and as if just descending from heaven, was placing upon his head a crown of stars. This imposing structure, "forty feet high," was drawn by twelve white horses, harnessed four abreast, led by grooms dressed in the manner of ancient Rome.

The passing of this wonderful vehicle, preceded by its band of music and its chorus of singers, by ranks of men also in long white tunics and wearing crowns of green branches, kindled all the enthusiasm of the susceptible Parisians. Upon the car were various inscriptions, the reading of which increased and prolonged the emotion of the people : —

"Mortals are equal; it is not birth, it is virtue alone, which makes the difference."

"It is necessary to love the laws; it is necessary to be their slave, and to bear all the burden of them. He who is willing to violate them does not love his country."

"He defended Calas, La Barre, Sirven, and Montbailly."

"Poet, philosopher, historian, he gave a great impulse to the human mind, and prepared us to become free."

"He combated the atheists and the fanatics."

"He inspired toleration."

"He claimed the rights of man against serfdom and feudalism."

Immediately behind the car walked Belle-et-Bonne and her husband, with her infant daughter carried by its nurse. La Harpe also walked with this group. Then came deputations from the National Assembly, the municipality, the courts of justice, and the veteran soldiers, the procession being closed by another body of cavalry. A hundred thousand persons, it is said, composed this procession, which was witnessed by six hundred thousand spectators. "It seemed," says Dubois, "that that worship of human excellence, elegant and poetic, which made the delight of antiquity, and which is still the charm of souls susceptible to the beautiful creations of the arts and letters, lived again in its completeness before our eyes."

The procession halted first before the Opera-House, adorned with the bust of Voltaire, and with medallions bearing the names of his operas. Here all the artists of the company joined in singing that spirited song of his at the end of the first act of "Samson," which the Revolution adopted as its own, beginning, —

"Peuple, éveille-toi! Romps tes fers!"[1]

Thousands of voices joined in the chorus, which had already become familiar to the people. The next halt was in front of the house of the Villettes, upon the street which had been the Quai of the Monks, but which had now received the name it still bears, "Quai de Voltaire." The car here passed under a magnificent triumphal arch composed of four large poplar-trees united by garlands of oak leaves, a beautiful umbrageous roof, from which hung a crown of roses that descended upon the car as soon as it stopped. Upon a spacious plat-

[1] People, awake! Break your chains!

form in front of the house were seated in semicircles, one above the other, fifty young girls, all dressed in white robes with blue girdles, holding civic crowns, and wearing upon their heads diadems of roses. In front of the exquisite amphitheatre formed by them were the two daughters of Calas, in deep mourning, who, when the car stopped, advanced towards it, kissed the sarcophagus of their deliverer, and lifted up their hands in the attitude of blessing him. Madame de Villette also stepped forward, kissed the effigy, and raised her child in her arms, as if dedicating it to his spirit. This scene passed to the sound of pathetic music; and the young mother, overcome by her emotions, had to be carried away.

A halt was made, of course, at the Théâtre-Français, which was now called the "Theatre of the Nation." Here the decorations and the ceremonial were not less remarkable. All the columns were wreathed with garlands, and the whole edifice was brilliant. One inscription read, "He wrote 'Œdipe' at seventeen." Another was, "He wrote 'Irène' at eighty-three." Thirty-two medallions were placed upon the pillars, each containing the name of one of Voltaire's dramas. When the car stopped before the theatre, curtains opened, and exhibited a sanctuary, so lighted that all the rays formed a halo around the head of Voltaire's statue. Here, while the musicians again performed the chorus from "Samson," La Rive placed upon the sarcophagus a crown, and the ladies of the company also laid their wreaths upon it.

It was now late in the evening, and it began to rain again with such abundance that a part of the persons accompanying the car sought refuge in the vestibule of the theatre, and there was a general flight of the ladies. Then, lighted by thousands of torches, the procession resumed its march, and reached the Pantheon at ten o'clock in the evening. The sarcophagus was deposited in the place prepared for it, near the tombs of Descartes and Mirabeau.

And there the body remained, an object of veneration to many, an object of horror to many, until the return of the Bourbon king to Paris, after the departure of Bonaparte to Elba. In April, 1814, a few of the royalists, one of whom was De Puymorin, the Director of the Mint, who afterwards told the story, represented to the ministry that the presence of the re-

mains of Voltaire in the ancient church of Sainte-Geneviève was an outrage not to be borne. There were several conferences, we are told, as to the manner in which those remains should be removed. It was decided, at length, that it should be done secretly, and that the secret should be kept. One night, in the month of May, 1814, the bones of Voltaire and of Rousseau were taken out of their coffins of lead, tumbled into a common sack, and placed in a hackney coach stationed in the rear of the church. The carriage moved away slowly, accompanied by five or six persons, and went out of town by unfrequented streets to the barrier De la Gare, opposite Bercy. Near that barrier there was then an extensive piece of waste ground inclosed with a board fence, public property, not yet put to any use whatever. Near the middle of the inclosure a deep hole had been previously dug by persons who were then waiting for the arrival of this strange burial party. The sack of bones was emptied into the pit; a sack of lime was poured upon them. The hole was filled up with earth, all traces of the burial were obliterated as far as possible, and the party then separated in silence.[1]

The secret was well kept. There was occasionally a rumor, difficult to trace, and not generally believed, that the sarcophagus was empty. In 1864, when the family of the Villettes became extinct, the heart of Voltaire (which had been removed from the body when it was embalmed, in 1778, inclosed in a silver vase and given by Madame Denis to the husband of Belle-et-Bonne) became the property of the nation, and it was a question with the usurper what should be done with it. He suggested that it be placed with the other remains of the poet in the church of Sainte-Geneviève. The Archbishop of Paris, who was probably acquainted with these facts, observed that it might be well to ascertain first whether the ashes of Voltaire were really in the place where they had been deposited. An examination of the sarcophagus was ordered. It was opened, and found to be empty. Thus the fate actually befell the remains which the poet had dreaded from the time when he saw the body of Adrienne Lecouvreur carried out, at dead of night, and placed in an unmarked grave in a vacant lot of the outskirts of Paris. "God, thou shalt be avenged!"

[1] Voltaire, Son Retour et sa Mort. Par G. Desnoiresterres. Page 519.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE PLACES THAT KNEW HIM.

The "Life of Voltaire since his Death" could be an interesting and important book, if the time for it had come. Here I will merely add a few particulars appertaining to him and to it, which may gratify the reader's curiosity.

A few weeks before his death he wrote, "I must set out in fifteen days, or all perishes at Ferney." Much that he valued there did perish speedily. He left a will, brief, direct, and very French in its provisions, by which he fulfilled an old engagement to his niece, Madame Denis, in leaving her the bulk of his fortune. She, at the age of sixty-eight, recompensed herself for sharing the long exile of the most gifted and agreeable man in Europe by marrying the dullest, her Duvivier, aged forty-eight, — a man of much silent force, considerable property, and an insensibility which won for him the name of the Extinguisher.[1] The reader, perhaps, will not be sorry to learn that he reduced her at once to complete subjection, and that they lived together the usual life of elderly French couples. She soon sold the château and grounds of Ferney, and the estate was gradually broken up. The watchmaking interest declined. Many of the "artists," as they were then styled, returned to Geneva or removed to Paris. At the present time the village contains 1200 inhabitants, about the same number as at the death of Voltaire, in 1778.

It was evidently the expectation of the lord of Ferney that his niece would at least retain possession of his property there. Some passages of his will seem to imply as much. "I leave," says the will, "to Monsieur Wagnière eight thousand livres, which, joined to the four hundred livres per annum that he possesses in his own right at Paris, by contract (certified by M. Lalen, notary), upon the India Company, will secure him

[1] Souvenirs of Madame Vigée le Brun, page 146. New York, 1879.

a suitable livelihood, especially if he remains with Madame Denis." He also bequeathed to his servants a year's wages, on the apparent presumption that they would be kept in the service of the family. He left to the poor of the parish ("if there are any poor," he added) three hundred livres. He left to Madame Wagnière his fine garments of fur, silk, and velvet. He requested the curé of the parish to accept "a little diamond of the value of five hundred francs," and gave a sum of fifteen hundred francs to the local lawyer who would assist Madame Denis in the execution of his will. To his nephew, the Abbé Mignot, and to his grand-nephew, D'Hornoy, he bequeathed one hundred thousand francs each.

The château still exists, with some external changes. It has been ever since one of the chief objects of curiosity in the neighborhood; and the room in which the master used to sleep and dictate remains very much as it was on the day when he left it for his last journey to Paris. The little church also still stands, though of late years used only as a hayloft, storeroom, or stable. Wagnière lived and died at Ferney. M. Clogenson, one of the editors of Voltaire's works, visited the village in 1825, when he found the son of Wagnière living there as justice of the peace, his father having died in 1802. "It was," says M. Clogenson, "from this worthy magistrate that I learned how much the memory of Voltaire is revered at Ferney; and his testimony was confirmed by all the inhabitants whom I consulted, and, notably, by an old man almost a hundred years of age, named Marc Grandperret, an ancient farm servant of Voltaire."

Belle-et-Bonne survived him forty-four years, most of the time a widow in liberal circumstances, a familiar and valued personage in the intellectual society of Paris. She burned one grain of incense before his bust every day as long as she lived. Lady Morgan, who visited her in 1816, describes her apartments as a kind of temple dedicated to his memory. Her library contained his works, her desk his manuscript letters, and the arm-chair in which he sat was in the chimney corner, — a chair provided with a little desk on its right arm, in which he read and wrote during the last twenty years of his life. On the mantel-piece was his bust in porcelain; in a corner of the room, a copy of Pigalle's statue; and his young

VOLTAIRE'S HOUSE AT FERNEY.

portrait, mentioned elsewhere, hung upon one of the walls. In a closet she preserved the rich dressing-gown worn when he received the crowd who thronged to him in 1778; also, the coat he wore at his coronation, and the very crown of laurel which was then placed upon his head. All these relics she would exhibit to a sympathetic friend like Lady Morgan, for whom she also arranged a Voltairean festival, at which many grains of incense were burned before the bust, and she read with good effect the poem contributed to the festival of 1791 by Joseph Chénier. She died in 1822. Her son, who lived to 1859, was a devotee of everything his mother detested, and left his large fortune to the Count de Chambord, the heir of the Bourbons. His will, however, was broken, and the property fell to his natural heirs. This is a fact full of significance. Such lapses will continually occur until "philosophy" becomes constructive, and provides assurance, consolation, and admonition for the weak, the blind, and the always anxious sons of men.

The houses occupied by Voltaire during the latter half of his life all exhibit some mementos of him, from the royal palace of Potsdam to the Hôtel de Villette, No. 1 Rue de Beaune. Les Délices, of late years, has usually been occupied as a young ladies' boarding-school. It is still called by the name that Voltaire gave it, and the street which has grown up along the ancient road is called the Rue Des Délices. An American lady in Geneva writes (October 10, 1879), "The theatre that Voltaire built adjoining Les Délices, in the form of the letter T, seems small even for private theatricals, — about thirty of my paces along the longest part of the T. Small as it is, it was used by a company from Paris, until pious Geneva put a stop to such sinful practices. Times have changed since then. Last week this same Geneva opened its elegant new theatre, built upon the model of the opera-house in Paris, at the cost of some millions of francs, and the city gives its manager the theatre rent free, the gas and orchestra, and a subvention of a hundred thousand francs a year."

Yet Calvin is not forgotten there. In the number of the "Journal de Genève" in which the scheme of the first season of this theatre was conspicuously published and its opening announced, there could be found modest advertisements in

small type, calling the attention of parents to "courses of evangelical instruction for young ladies every Monday and Friday," by resident pastors; also, an announcement of "a *séance* upon the evangelization of Spain." We observe similar coincidences in other Calvinized towns. Boston, for example, has surpassed all cities of its rank in America in making liberal provision for the fine arts, and in adorning its public places with statues, some of which are more then well intentioned. The mother city of New England has not yet advanced to the point, reached by Geneva, of giving municipal aid to the dramatic art, which of all others needs it most. It is, however, sure to do so in good time; perhaps, to take the lead in doing so.

At Cirey, the seat of the Du Châtelets since the thirteenth century, and still possessed by a branch of the family, Voltaire is more nearly obliterated than at any other of his celebrated abodes. Cirey-sur-Blaise is still hard to find. An American traveler, however, reached the place during the vintage of 1878, and found it the same secluded land of vines and iron that it was when Voltaire and Emilie lived, loved, and quarreled there, one hundred and forty years ago. From the nearest station (Bar-sur-Aube, upon the Chaumont and Troyes railroad) an old-fashioned diligence rumbles daily to Cirey, distant ten miles or more, crossing the Blaise several times on little bridges.

Voltaire's rooms were in the "old château," but they were demolished by the reconstruction of the interior. On a white marble tablet between the two windows of his chamber was this inscription: —

"Du repos, ma douce étude,
Peu de livres, point d'ennuyeux,
Un ami dans la solitude,—
Voilà mon sort; il est heureux."[1]

This marble tablet is still preserved in the château, and is the only *relic* of Voltaire, if it can be called such, which is to be found there.

In the house of the manager of the estate, however, there are portraits of Voltaire and Madame du Châtelet, and in the upper story of the old château are preserved the walls of the

[1] Some rest, my pleasing study, few books, no bores, a friend in solitude,— such is my lot; it is happy.

little theatre in which they used to entertain their friends. The estate appears to have been kept entire, although the Duke du Châtelet lost his head during the Revolution.

It is at Paris that the memory of Voltaire has been most vividly preserved. A peculiar warfare has been waged there at intervals, for a hundred years, between his spirit and the spirit to which he gave the name of *l'Infâme*. At Paris, as everywhere else, it is the enemies of truth that do most to spread abroad a knowledge of it. That empty sarcophagus speaks for it more powerfully than if it were a Tamerlane's pyramid of bones. It is vocal; it is resonant; it booms and thunders over the earth. His dust might have been forgotten; but that pregnant void, that significant emptiness, never ceases to provoke, necessitate, and emphasize explanation. And as often as, since his death, anything has been done or proposed, in Paris to promote his objects or signalize his name, *l'Infâme* has eagerly seized the *rôle* of advertiser of the scheme. We can tell the date of the editions of his works by the number of feeble attacks upon them mentioned in catalogues of French publications.

Remarkable, too, is the *force* of the retort that *l'Infâme* provokes whenever Voltaire is the object of attack. The Bourbon restoration, endured by France from 1814 to 1830, which emptied his coffin, produced Béranger's "Baptism of Voltaire," which will be a fresh possession to each generation after the trivial episode of the restoration has been generally forgotten. The discovery of the midnight theft of the remains suggested the project of a national monument in his honor, the mention of which elicited electric responses.

"A monument to Voltaire in France," wrote Garibaldi, February 10, 1867, "means the return of that noble country to its position at the head of human progress towards the fraternity of nations. This is of good augury for the entire world, of which that mighty man was a citizen, and a terrible shock to the coalition of despotism and falsehood."

On the 30th of May, 1878, when he had been dead a hundred years, we may say with literal truth, that "*all* Paris" was at length attentive to him; for while Victor Hugo was addressing words of impassioned eulogium to a vast concourse of all that was most enlightened and most masculine in France,

churches were filled with capitalists and ladies crouching before their priests in timorous or affected deprecation. Victor Hugo's discourse on that unique occasion was the crowning utterance of this century: it was the most Christian thing spoken on earth since the dying Christ said, "They know not what they do." Here is the page of it which kindled the audience to the noblest enthusiasm, spoken as it was almost within sight of the Exposition of that year: —

"If to kill is a crime, to kill much cannot be an extenuating circumstance. [Laughter and bravos.] If to steal is a disgrace, to invade cannot be a glory. [Continued applause.] Te Deums are of small significance here; homicide is homicide; bloodshed is bloodshed; it alters nothing to call one's self Cæsar or Napoleon; in the eyes of the eternal God, a murderer is not changed in character because, instead of a hangman's cap, there is placed upon his head an emperor's crown. [Long acclamation. Triple salvo of applause.] Ah! let us proclaim absolute verities! Let us dishonor war! No; bloody glory does not exist. No; it is not good, and it is not useful, to make corpses. No; it cannot be that life should travail for death. No, O mothers who surround me; it cannot be that war, the thief, is to continue to take your offspring. No; it cannot be that women are to bear children in anguish, that men are to be born, that communities are to plow and sow, that the peasant is to fertilize the fields, and the workman enrich the cities, that thinkers are to meditate, that industry is to perform its marvels, that genius is to execute its prodigies, that the vast human activity is to multiply in the presence of the starry heavens its efforts and creations, in order to produce that frightful international exposition which is called a field of battle! [Profound sensation. The whole audience rises and applauds the speaker.] The true field of battle, — behold it! It is this rendezvous of the masterpieces of human labor which Paris at this moment offers to the world!"

The oration was of such force, beauty, and truth that it must stand as the highest effort of the kind in a literature rich in the tributes of genius to human worth. The happiest touch in it, perhaps, was the passage in which the orator spoke of Voltaire's habitual use of ridicule: —

"Whatever may be his just wrath, it passes, and the irritated Voltaire always gives place to the Voltaire calmed. Then, in that profound eye, the SMILE appears.

"That smile is wisdom. That smile, I repeat it, is Voltaire. That

smile sometimes becomes laughter, but the philosophic sadness tempers it. Toward the strong, it is mockery; toward the weak, it is a caress. It disquiets the oppressor, and reassures the oppressed. Against the great, it is raillery; for the little, it is pity. Ah, let us be moved by that smile! It had in it rays of the dawn. It illuminated the true, the just, the good, and what there is of worthy in the useful. It lighted up the interior of superstitions. Those ugly things it is salutary to see; he has shown them. Luminous, that smile was fruitful also. The new society, the desire for equality and concession, and that beginning of fraternity which called itself tolerance, reciprocal good-will, the just accord of men and rights, reason recognized as the supreme law, the annihilation of prejudices and fixed opinions, the serenity of souls, the spirit of indulgence and of pardon, harmony, peace, — behold what have come from that great smile!

"On the day — very near, without any doubt — when the identity of wisdom and clemency will be recognized, the day when the amnesty will be proclaimed, I affirm it, up there, in the stars, Voltaire will smile. [Triple salvo of applause. Cries, *Vive l'amnistie!*]

"Gentlemen, between two servants of humanity, who appeared eighteen hundred years apart, there is a mysterious relation.

"To combat Pharisaism; to unmask imposture; to overthrow tyrannies, usurpations, prejudices, falsehoods, superstitions; to demolish the temple in order to rebuild it, that is to say, to replace the false by the true; to attack a ferocious magistracy; to attack a sanguinary priesthood; to take a whip and drive the money-changers from the sanctuary; to reclaim the heritage of the disinherited; to protect the weak, the poor, the suffering, the overwhelmed; to struggle for the persecuted and oppressed, — that was the war of Jesus Christ! And who waged that war? It was Voltaire.

"The completion of the evangelical work is the philosophical work; the spirit of meekness began, the spirit of tolerance continued. Let us say it with a sentiment of profound respect: JESUS WEPT; VOLTAIRE SMILED. Of that divine tear and of that human smile is composed the sweetness of the present civilization. [Prolonged applause.]"

This oration naturally excited the ire of the Bishop of Orleans, who wrote a letter to the orator, objecting to it, and presuming to remind him that he, too, had been reared a churchman. In his reply, the great poet seized the opportunity to direct attention anew to the woful alliance between despot and pontiff which has drenched Europe in blood age after age: —

"France had to pass an ordeal. France was free. A man traitorously seized her in the night, threw her down, and garroted her. If a

people could be killed, that man had slain France. He made her dead enough for him to be able to reign over her. He began his reign, since it was a reign, with perjury, lying in wait, and massacre. He continued it by oppression, by tyranny, by despotism, by an unspeakable parody of religion and justice. He was monstrous and little. The Te Deum, Magnificat, Salvum fac, Gloria tibi, were sung for him. Who sang them? Ask yourself. The law delivered the people up to him. The church delivered God up to him. Under that man sank down right, honor, country; he had beneath his feet oath, equity, probity, the glory of the flag, the dignity of men, the liberty of citizens. That man's prosperity disconcerted the human conscience. It lasted nineteen years. During that time you were in a palace. I was in exile. I pity you, sir."

Here again we observe the power of the stroke which is called forth when *l'Infâme* lifts its hand against the wonderful man who came into the world to crush it.

During his long life he never saw Rome. Italy, whose language, literature, and history he peculiarly loved, was closed against him. Nevertheless, at Rome, too, the hundredth anniversary of his death was celebrated with much enthusiasm. Columns of animadversion in the ecclesiastical gazettes gave the usual intense publicity to the project, and enhanced the lustre of the occasion. In the morning there was a great meeting of the Freemasons at the grand lodge of their order, where a suitable address was delivered, followed by a poem and by shorter speeches. In the evening, the Apollo theatre was crowded to witness a performance of Voltaire's tragedy of "Zaïre," the principal part being played by the first of European tragedians, Salvini. The proceeds, amounting to six thousand francs, were given to the schools of Rome.[1]

[1] London Times, Letter from Rome, of May 31, 1878.

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